

# Fire!

A HISTORY OF PINCKNEYVILLE AREA  
FIRE AND RESCUE



by TOM BARDLE



# Worst in 20 Years; Fought By 52 Firemen

Glow Lights  
Skies Before  
Dawn;

## Fire Department Boasts Deluxe Model Pumper

PINCKNEYVILLE FIRE ON SATURDAY NIGHT



Burned out back of a home that burned on S. Brown St. in Pinckneyville on Saturday.

## Kitchen Fire Guts Home

BY JOHN K. CROSSMAN

**PINCKNEYVILLE**  
A kitchen fire in a home in thought to be the cause of a fire that destroyed a home on Brown Street on Saturday night.

As the fire broke out shortly after 10 p.m., Mrs. Elin and the two boys turned off the lights and left the room. "I had just said, 'Watch five minutes' off on my own," she said.

Firemen didn't get to the house until about 11:30 p.m.

The fire broke out shortly after 10 p.m.

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## 6 Firemen Overcome While Battling Blaze

FIRE DISABLES CAPTAIN'S

6360 SHOVEL



## Arson Admitted

Pinckneyville Police found a 15-year-old boy who admitted to setting the fire.

The boy was taken to the Pinckneyville Police Station.

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The boy was taken to the Pinckneyville Police Station.

George Engelhardt flooded with  
plaques for 37 years of service  
with city-rural fire department



Green  
363.37  
bar

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December 2014





# What's Burning Inside

## Introduction

To The Readers	2
Dedication	2

## CHAPTER 1

### Our History With Fire

Pre-Department Days	3
Square Conflagration — 1884	3

## CHAPTER 2

### Needing Fire Protection

The Beginning	5
May 7, 1884 Resolution for Fire Department	6
Membership of the Fire Department — 1894	6

## CHAPTER 3

### Using Horse Power

The Horse Years	7
-----------------	---

### The Progression On Walnut Street

The Walnut Street Fire	10
Fire at the Strait Mine — The 1910s	11
Membership of the Fire Department — 1909	11

## CHAPTER 4

### Going Gas

The Chemical Engine Days (1920 to 1933)	13
Membership of the Fire Department — 1926	14
October 24, 1926: The #5 Mine Fire	14

## CHAPTER 5

### Applying New Methods

- 16 A New Style of Fighting Fires —  
Booster Tank Engines (1934 to 1955)

### Big Loss To Small Town

- 18 Membership of the Fire Department — 1940
- 18 January 1940: The Elmer Keene Store Fire
- 18 Luther Hutchings Tavern Fire
- 19 Gruner Hardware Store Fire
- 19 Membership of the Fire Department — 1947
- 20 Membership of the Fire Department — 1950

### Separate Departments Pull Resources

- 21 1955: The Tale of Two Departments
- 22 Membership of the Fire Department — 1959
- 24 Beaucoup Baptist Church Fire
- 25 Membership of the Fire Department — 1964
- 26 B.C. Christopher Company Mill Fire
- 27 Membership of the Fire Department — 1970

### A Tale of Two Eras

- 29 Windsor Hotel Tavern Fire

## CHAPTER 6

### A New Frontier

- 30 Firefighting in the Modern Era (1975 to 2000)

### Blow Me Down

- 33 The Conant Tornado
- 33 Membership of the Fire Department — 1983
- 34 The Crash of Air Illinois Flight 710
- 36 The Robert Duckworth Residence Fire

### “Go Home And Let It Burn Down!”

- 38 Rusty Nail Tavern Fire

### Garment Factory Loses To Fire

- 40 The Forest City Garment Factory Fire
- 44 Membership of the Fire Department — 1991

### The Captain Goes Up In Flames

- 45 Arch of Illinois 6360 Shovel Fire

### Firemen Struggle To Save Local Lumber Yard

- 47 The Home Lumber Fire
- 48 Membership of the Fire Department — 1997
- 51 Conclusion
- 52 Department Members
- 53 Chiefs of the Department
- 54 A Tragic End To The White Rabbit

Cover photos from left to right

Photo #1: Pinckneyville Fire Department members at an S.I.U.E. Hazmat training

Photo #2: Rural Structure Fire 1987

Photo #3: October 10, 1986 Forest City Garment Factory Fire

Bottom Photo: 1909 Fire Department in front of station

I've always wondered about the history of our department. Like everyone on the force, I asked questions and listened to the answers, but failed to write anything down on paper.

History is a rather unusual thing. It has a definite beginning, but never seems to have an ending. It is my hope that someone continues to add to the pages of this book. Perhaps it will be one of your sons or daughters — carrying on the great Pinckneyville firefighting tradition.

I was able to trace our history through many sources, including city council minutes, newspaper articles, eyewitness testimony and the Association's log-books. The bulk of the text is based on pure fact; other pieces come from some educated guessing on my part. I am sure other information will become available, and I will make every attempt to upgrade the text as it does.

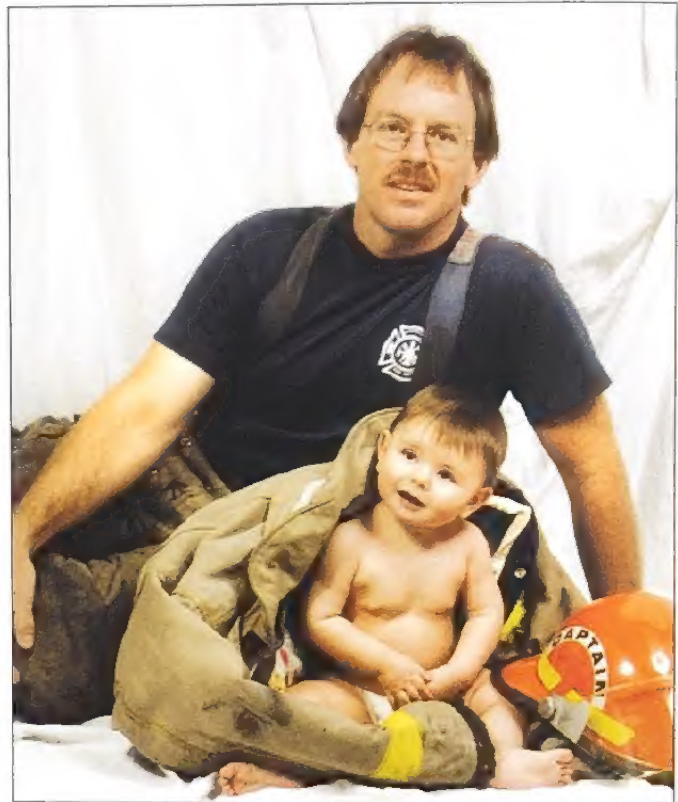
I have left some of the actual wording of original sources, because I found that it captured the mood of the day. I have added notations and remarks to allow the reader to follow the history more easily.

Remember, we are still writing the history of our department, today and in the future. We have the ability to shape this history as we choose. I feel that our forefathers would be proud of what we have accomplished. The pride, honor and traditions continue through each one of us. May God watch over and bless everything we do in the future. I would also like to tell everyone with whom I have served how proud and privileged I feel for the honor of doing so.

I hope you find these pages of interest and that you come away with the same pride in our department that I have.

*Captain Frederick Thomas Bardle*  
Pinckneyville City  
and Rural Fire Department

# To The Readers



*Author with Daughter Railyn Ruby Bardle*

*DEDICATION: I would like to acknowledge the people who helped make this book possible. It could not have been written if it were not for the patience of my family and the help of some wonderful friends: Craig Williams, Jerry M. Smith, Tacy Ticer, Jennifer Tarantino Linsin, Nic Hays, Paul Lilly, Kelly Friedrich and Laura Wilcoxon. I thank you all for your time and contribution.*



# Our History With Fire

TO UNDERSTAND THE EVOLUTION OF FIRE PROTECTION IN PINCKNEYVILLE, ONE MUST KNOW HOW AND WHY THE TOWN CAME TO EXIST. FROM THE SPRING OF 1835 UNTIL THE WINTER OF 1838, THE RAILROAD AND ITS SIDINGS WERE BEING INSTALLED. THERE WAS NO BUSINESS DISTRICT PRIOR TO THIS TIME; THE MASS TRANSIT OF TRADE GOODS WAS DIRECTLY TIED TO THE RAILROAD. PINCKNEYVILLE WAS A RURAL AREA BEFORE THE RAILROAD BROUGHT TRADE TO THE TOWN, AND SMALL FARMING WAS THE MAIN BUSINESS.

**O**n May 17, 1857, a vote to incorporate the city of Pinckneyville was held. The proposal was passed with a vote of 39 in favor and two opposing. Town meetings at the time were conducted in the courthouse, with John Baird as the first president. January 11, 1858 marked the first actual entry for some type of fire protection. A.D. Gosney and Martin Kuntz were ordered to procure "Hooks, ladders, and buckets ... sufficient ... for a hook and a ladder company." Four ladders, four hooks and a half-dozen leather buckets supplemented the hook and ladder wagon.

## Square Conflagration — 1884

On Thursday, January 10, 1884, just before midnight, a fire broke out at the F.H. Beck shoe store, located on East Water Street at the square's southwest corner. The alarm was sounded quickly, bringing citizens to the scene. Their efforts to save the shoe store proved fruitless, so most of the crowd turned from their efforts on the bucket brigade to salvaging the stock from the burning building. A west wind developed, pushing the fire eastward into the adjoining Klotz cigar store.

Pushed by the strong breeze and feeding on single-story framed

buildings, the fire soon turned into a raging inferno. The bucket brigade was brought back into full service just before Weingarh's dry-goods store caught fire. Unfortunately, however, the brigade's efforts were to no avail, as Weingarh's two-story framed building soon began to burn. The fire then raced eastward to the two-story brick building occupied by Haas' Clothing Store. The upper part of this building was occupied by Doctor Huntsingers' office.

The fire continued to move eastward to Hincke and Brothers marketplace. Here, the citizens' hard work finally paid off. While this building suffered severe damage, it survived as a fire-stop. But the war was not yet over; buildings opposite the F.H. Beck shoe store were now endangered by winds that were shifting to the northeast.

Northeast wind gusts pushed the fire west to the Bayless building and across the street to Joseph Bischoff's City Hotel. Workers were advised to abandon the hotel at least three times during the firefight. But the bucket brigade refused to yield and was finally able to save the structure. Embers were held down by 10 inches of snow that had fallen only days earlier.

In all, nine businesses and one residence were affected by the blaze; four buildings were completely burned, and nearly \$12,000 in fire loss resulted from the conflagration.

*the fire soon  
turned into a  
raging inferno*

Several things happened as a result of this fire. Pinckneyville decided that a method was needed to quickly assemble townspeople. This need was answered by the E.C. Plow Works Company's whistle. Three long blasts from the whistle would serve to send out the alarm to the town.

*the town  
aldermen realized  
that a bucket  
brigade originating  
from the courthouse  
well was useless  
as a first  
line of defense*

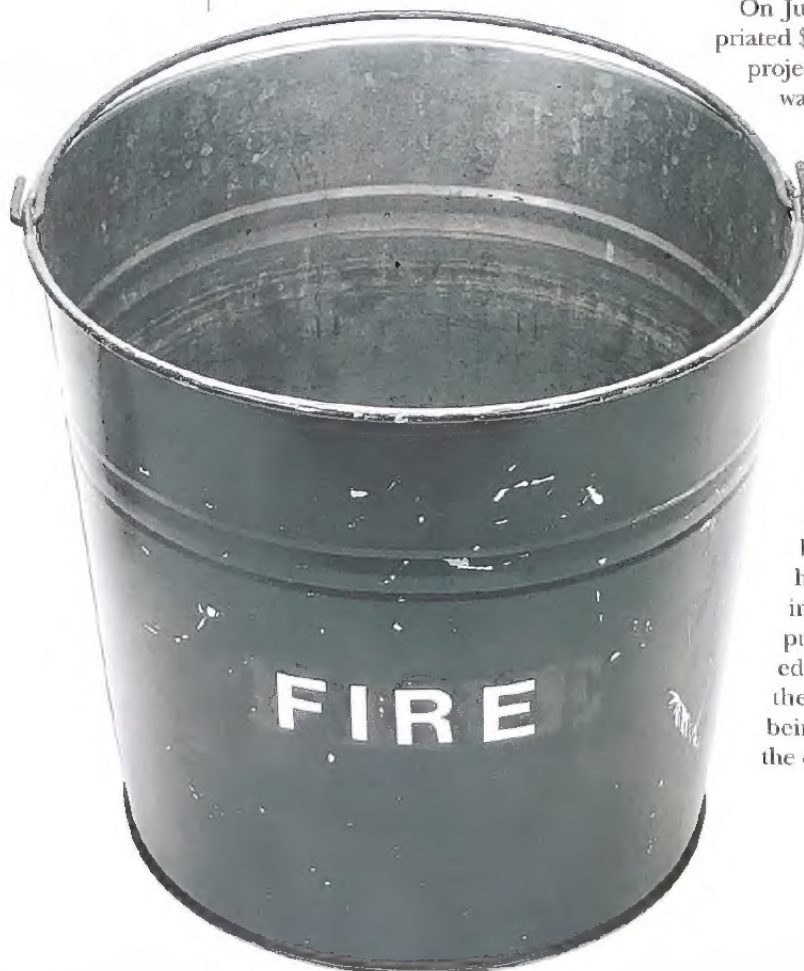
It was also discovered that "fire annihilators," or fire extinguishers, proved extremely effective in fighting this fire. Another positive outcome was community awareness: Fire-prevention articles were published in the town's newspaper following the blaze.

January 1888 saw the next entry for fire protection. A dozen rubber fire buckets were ordered from the A.O. Nelson Company at a cost of \$19.35. Pinckneyville had grown to a town of 170 people.

The largest building apart from the county courthouse was Gruner Hardware Store, built in 1881.

In late winter of 1884, a large conflagration destroyed the south side of the square. This event, more than any other, influenced the future of fire protection in the city. As a result of this blaze, the town aldermen realized that a bucket brigade originating from the courthouse well was useless as a first line of defense. They also noted that some type of trained fire company had to be organized to handle the town's emergencies.

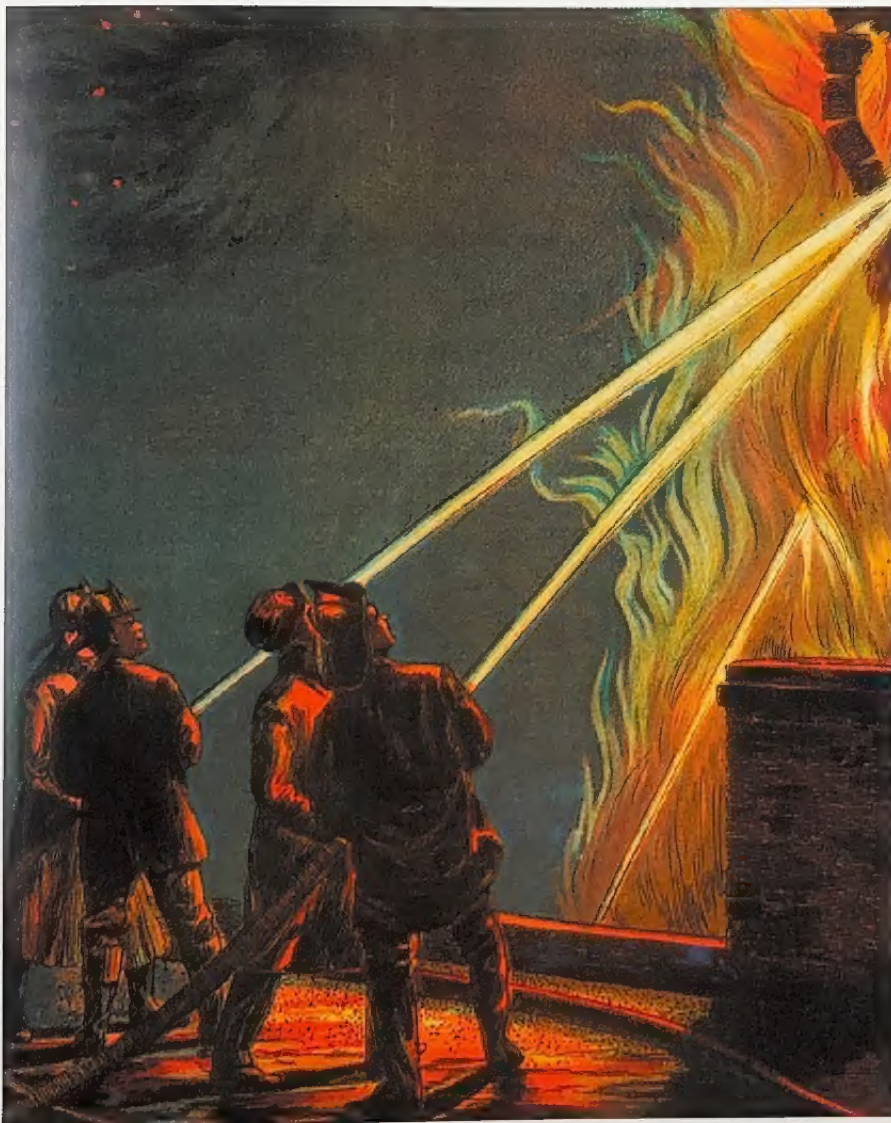
On July 3, 1888, Pinckneyville appropriated \$4,500 in bonds for a waterworks project. The 4- to 6-inch water system was made of cast iron and fed one fireplug on the northeast corner of the square and one on the southwest side. The city waterworks system's pump station was located at Breese Lake, just north of the city. This boiler-type system, which featured a live tank to allow the force of the water to be utilized in the fire-plugs, was completed in 1890. The hydrants had two 2.5-inch connectors with the wrenches; connectors were kept in neighborhood shops, and storeowners had the responsibility of producing them when necessary. Near the project's completion, it was decided to extend the service south to the railroad, with W.S. Wilson being awarded the contract for the extension. ♠





# Needing Fire Protection

WITH PINCKNEYVILLE'S WATERWORKS SYSTEM NEARING COMPLETION, THE CITY GROWING IN POPULATION, BUSINESSES MOVING TO THE AREA AND THE LARGE FIRE ON THE SQUARE STILL VIVID IN THE MEMORIES OF THE TOWN ALDERMEN, IT BECAME TIME TO TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO ESTABLISHING SOME TYPE OF PERMANENT FIRE PROTECTION.



*Painting depicting firemen at work*

On September 1, 1890, a baby mine hose cart was purchased from L. M. Rumisey Manufacturing of St. Louis for \$196. Nine hundred feet of hose and various nozzles were also purchased at this time. With modern fire equipment now at the city's disposal, the aldermen began the task of organizing a fire company. However, this would not prove to be an easy task.

On September 12, 1892, a motion was made by Mayor Wangilin to assemble citizens to organize a volunteer fire company. The meeting was held the following night, and Dick Harris became the town's first fire chief. Unfortunately, a lack of initial interest hampered the formation of the fire company, and Dick Harris' career as fire chief lasted only a year.

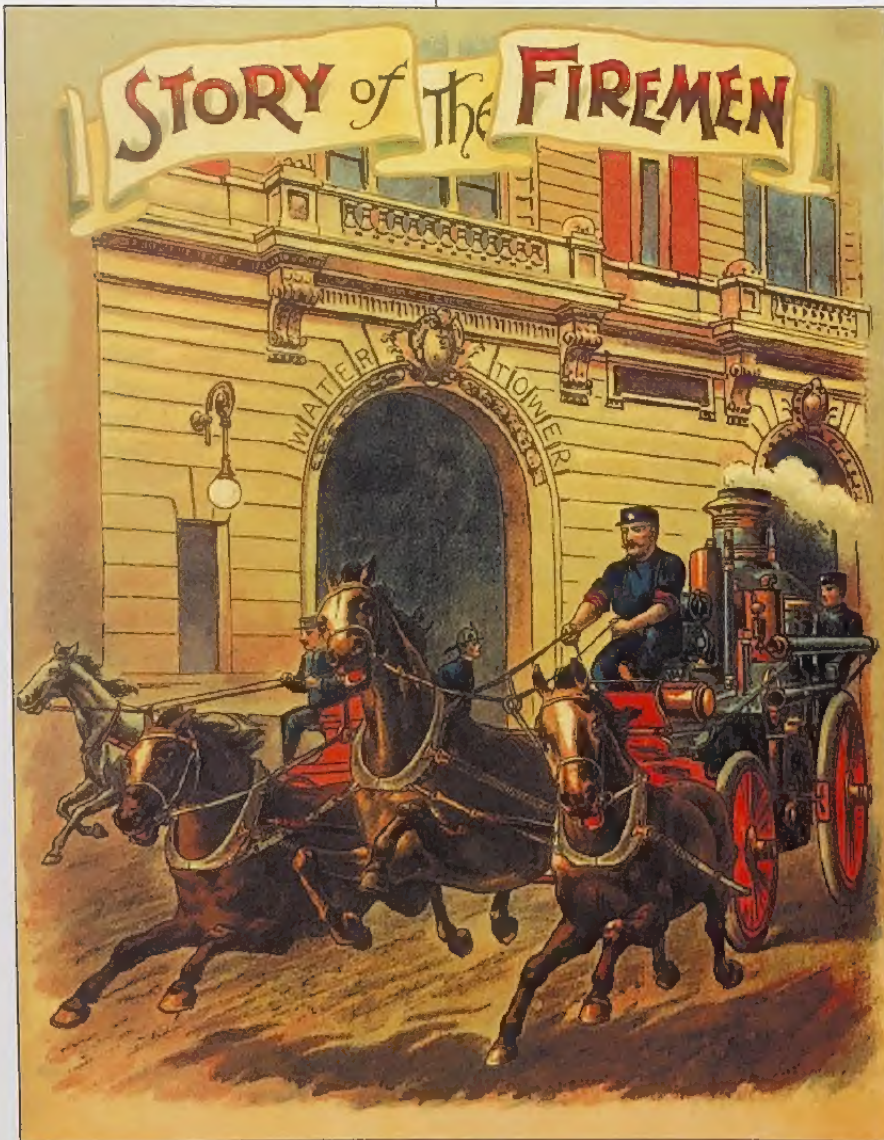
On September 4, 1893, Alderman Wangilin motioned for the mayor to call a special meeting for the purpose of reviving the town's fire company. The meeting was held on a Saturday evening five days later, with a Mr. Sherman becoming the new chief. The mayor also authorized 500 feet of hose to be purchased at a cost of \$325.

On December 4, 1893, the city bought a Christmas present for its firemen: a hose carriage from P.J. Cooney, costing \$110. (A hose carriage is a big wheel with 2.5-inch hose that is pulled either by manual means or by a single horse.) On May 7, 1894, a temporary building was built between Kanes Stable and Rules Blacksmith Shop for the purpose of storing the hook and ladder



wagon, the hose cart, and the carriage. This building was erected in approximately the same area where the fire department stands today. (Prior to this, the fire department's equipment had been kept at stables located at 609 Mill Street, where the Consolidated Insurance building is now located.) Also, a new fire chief, Harry Gruner, took over on May 7, 1894. At least four members of the Gruner family came to serve the fire department through the years; three advanced to become chief.

*On December 4, 1893, a hose carriage was purchased by the city and presented to its firemen.*



### May 7, 1894 Resolution for Fire Department

I. That each member of the fire department (in service) be granted the compensation of one dollar (\$1.00) for each alarm of fire and fifty cents (\$.50) per hour while he is fighting the same.

II. That the city Marshall and his assistant be required to attend all fires and keep boys and loafers from the hose cart, ladder wagon and apparatus, and all tools while the department is in service and also see that bystanders and on lookers stand back out of the way.

III. That the sum of (\$1.50) each be allowed to any two men that the Chief may appoint to attend to washing wagons, polishing lanterns and putting everything in a neat clean condition after use. (\$3.00) being the maximum amount allowed for this work regardless of the length of time required to perform it.

IV. That the Chief be requested to make a monthly report to this council at its regular meeting.

V. That the names of gentlemen submitted as members of the fire company are satisfactory to the cause.

Fire Department Committee:  
Rushing, Malone and Duckworth

### Membership of the Fire Department — 1894

Chief Harry Gruner  
Louis Bischof  
Will Clark  
Charles Driemeyer  
John Jick  
J.C. McDonald  
T.W. McDonald  
William Schroeder

*Painting depicting firemen racing to a fire using horsepower.*



# Using Horse Power

AS THE TURN OF THE CENTURY NEARED, THE PINCKNEYVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT WAS KNOWN AS ONE OF THE BEST FIRE DEPARTMENTS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE STATE.

**M**any of the men made their living renting out their horse teams for work. William Roden was the team driver for most of the horse days. Roden joined the department on February 4, 1895 and resigned on September 2, 1910. Most of the fire departments of the day used steamers, but these were voted down by Pinckneyville's city council in 1886, in favor of horses. Chemical engines were also in use at this time (Pinckneyville adopted chemical engines in 1920, leading to the end of the use of horses to pull fire equipment.)

One must remember that fire departments were still relatively young in 1895 — especially in rural southern Illinois. Despite the relative youth and inexperience of these new departments, there was success in the struggle against fire loss: In 1896, in the United States, loss to fire totaled only \$111,856,067.

Meanwhile, The Pinckneyville Fire Department continued to grow and improve. On March 9, 1896, a fireplug was installed in front of the firehouse, and 500 feet of 2.5-inch hose was bought for the hose wagon. In June of the same year, a gong was installed on the fire wagon for \$6. In 1897, the roof of the firehouse was painted, and Mrs. J.B. McDonald made a Pinckneyville Fire Department flag.

On June 23, 1899, Charles Driemeyer was made fire chief, Thomas Malone became the assistant chief and George Gruner was voted secretary and treasurer. In 1901, the firemen started holding regular practices, and the hose cart was sold for \$50. A supervisor of waterworks, T.M. Davis, was appointed to take on the responsibility of maintaining the

fireplugs, removing this duty from the fire department. In November, the firemen broke their bell; they sold the old one for \$11.50 (more than they had paid for it back in 1894). The new bell was heavier by 200 pounds and rang in the key of G, so it could be heard for greater distances. (This 1,000-pound bell now resides in St. Paul's Church, where it was installed in 1940.)

In 1902, through the efforts of Assistant Chief J.C. Thetford, The Pinckneyville Fire Department joined the Fireman's Association of Illinois, becoming the Association's first down-state member.

*"It was a shameful mistake to put him in office"*



Governor and Judge on city square's east side (circa 1912)

*Upon arrival, firefighters rescued a bed-ridden child from the smoky upstairs, and the fire burning the roof and upstairs was quickly extinguished.*

In 1903, the city attorney was instructed to enforce ordinance number 115 for the collection of 2 percent of all fire premiums issued in the city. Unfortunately, in February, The Henry Hougland Saloon near downtown burned to the ground — bad weather had hampered firefighters' efforts. The city payroll for this fire was \$33.50. In July of that year, the Pinckneyville firehouse got a new paint job, and the ladders on the hook and ladder wagon were replaced. A phone was installed in department headquarters in December.

The year 1904 began badly for our firemen and the city: On January 7, a fire at the light plant, located on Gordon Street, damaged so many cables that the town had to temporarily revert to gas lighting. February 9 marked the most political fire in Pinckneyville's history. Once again, the light plant caught fire and burned completely to the ground. This \$9,000 fire was most likely the result of damaged cables left

unrepaired after the first fire. The owner had no insurance, and Pinckneyville was left without electricity until July.

The mayor, Dr. W.H. Smith, was completely against the installation of \$2,500 worth of electrical lighting, favoring staying with gas lamps "to move Pinckneyville into the future." The rest of the city council, however, was in favor of installing 40 electrical lamps. The mayor was severely criticized and called such things as "Old Foggy." Direct quotes from city councilmen released to the newspapers included "It was a shameful mistake to put him in office" and "He's an old bullheaded buzzard." Needless to say, the city had no use for gas lamps and no use for Dr. W.H. Smith, and he never won another election. By 1908, all 40 electric lamps were installed.

Other fires in 1904 included the February fire at Kaiser Saloon on Parker Street. The saloon was saved and reopened for business after a month of repairs. The Parker residence also caught fire in February and was heavily damaged. Unfortunately, the McKimmy residence burned to the ground on November 7, and the Kaizer Saloon was again damaged by fire on December 5.

Changes and improvements also took place at the department in 1904. In February, 300 feet of fire hose was bought for \$195.50 from The Day Rubber Company. Ten pairs of rubber boots were also purchased from The Day Rubber Company for \$30. The first test call using the new bell took place on May 2, 1904, the result of a city resolution that the fire bell would be rung at 7:30 p.m. every day.

An election of officers took place on February 25. Mathew Rule replaced the retiring Charles Driemeyer as chief. James McDonald became assistant chief, and George R. Gruner became secretary. The other 1904 members included Charles Gruner, R. Rebholz, Fred Reese, Samuel Rule, Jacob Sattler, J.C. Thetford and Edward Williams. According to the Advocate newspaper, these were "the 10 bravest men in the county." Their equipment consisted of







*Painting depicting  
fireman saving  
a little girl.*

two hose reels, a hook and ladder, 1,000 feet of fire hose, and a large fire bell.

The year 1905 began with a large fire at the Illinois Central Railroad Company on January 5. On a more positive note, a roof was added to the firehouse in April.

A water resolution was passed in August that described how to install a fireplug. All hydrants had to be set over an excavation not less than 8 inches

square and 12 inches deep. To prevent freezing, the excavation had to be filled with brickbat, sand or rock so that it would drain properly. Platforms had to be made of heavy timber nailed to a 2-foot crosspiece to prevent damage from shaking.

In October, a special election was held to see if city voters favored the issuance of bonds for a new firehouse. Upon the vote's approval, a committee

consisting of W.W. Winn, fireman Matt Rule and J.C. McDonald was sent to inspect the firehouses of Belleville and East St. Louis. Later that year, the city bought the property for the firehouse from Matt Rule. The plan was for a new brick building to be erected. It would be 32 feet wide and 50 feet long, with an iron roof and adequate facilities for drying hose. Construction costs for the building were not to exceed \$5,000. The firehouse was to be located on 50 feet of frontage on the east side of Walnut Street.

The contract for the building was awarded to Frank and Watson Contractors for a cost of \$2,302.95. The building was completed in June 1907. A water tower was erected directly behind the building in July at a cost of \$4,364.

Pinckneyville's sixth chief, J.C. McDonald, took over in January 1907. McDonald was an original member, but left the department after 20 months as its chief.

On June 21, the double-story farmhouse of Mrs. Lucinda Holmes caught fire from a flue spark. J.C. Thetford and his squad are credited with the fastest run ever made to a fire scene for their speedy response to this blaze. Upon arrival, firefighters rescued a bed-ridden child from the smoky upstairs, and the fire burning the roof and upstairs was quickly extinguished. ♠

# The Progression On Walnut Street

## The Walnut Street Fire

The Walnut Street Fire of June 28, 1908 marked the second-largest conflagration to hit the city since the square burned in 1884. This was an arson fire set at Beck's Grocery Store and Peyton's Drug Store to cover up a burglary. No run was made by the horses, since the location was directly across from the station; firemen manually pulled their equipment where it was needed. Although the fire had already made great headway when the alarm was received, the department was credited with saving thousands of dollars in property.

Charles Biby (not a fireman) threw the fire department's ladders up to the Beck building just in time to save Mrs. Thomas Shannon, whose apartment was located above the burning building. While the firefight was carried out in an overall atmosphere of teamwork, the operation was hampered by the night pumper, who inexplicably refused to increase pressure on city water mains.

The fire completely destroyed Beck's Grocery Store and Peyton's Drug Store. Several other businesses were damaged, including Dr. Peyton's dentist office, with \$1,250 in damages; Mrs. Sam Hawkins' building, with \$2,500 in damages; the Kane and Kane dentist office, with \$1,000 in damages; the Malone Building, with \$500 in damages; the J.C. Cabiness Millinery, with \$250 in damages; and the C.C. Hoffman Furniture Store, with \$2,500 in damages.

Several buildings burned in this spectacular fire — Beck's Grocery Store, Elias's Kane Jewelry Store and C. C. Hoffman's Furniture Store — were rebuilt by September with modern, fireproof materials.

The year 1908 also marked the inauguration of a new chief, George R. Gruner. Gruner was with the department from October 7, 1895 to September 1, 1910. He was given an operating budget of \$500, and the fire department phone was moved to his residence.

Joe Schillings installed new horse stalls in the firehouse in September. Ladders and fire buckets were purchased in October.



*Walnut Street about 1907*



*Walnut Street Fire — June 28, 1908*



*The aftermath...*



## Fire at the Strait Mine – The 1910s

On February 7, 1910, an alarm brought firefighters to the Strait Mine to combat a tibble and engine-room fire. The Strait Mine was located just north of town by the railroad crossing. Prior to the firefighters' arrival, the blaze had been vented from the engine room and spread to the tibble area. Quick action by the men is credited with saving the tibble from being destroyed. The Strait Mine fire was one of the first in which alarms were toned by the Pinckneyville Telephone Company. The fire wagon was damaged at this fire; the city agreed to replace it, but only on the condition that the firemen donated the necessary labor! While the wagon was being redone, it was decided to repair the hose cart as well.

Upon his resignation on September 1, 1910, George R. Gruner was instated as "Honorary Member of the Pinckneyville Fire Department Number One." William Roden and J. Nort Taffee also resigned at this time, while George



1909 Fire Department

Fulton and Hugh Campbell became new members.

The new fire chief, Andrew Grant Campbell, was quite a character. He worked as a blacksmith before becoming fire chief. He used his talents to keep the horse teams very well shod throughout the years. Campbell joined the department in 1907 and served until his death on March 26, 1933. He was known to be the type of man to take over a conversation and react immediately to any situation. A telling story circulated about Chief Campbell. One day, prior to joining the department, Campbell was helping E.C. Eaton blast out a fencerow east of town. It seems there was one stump that refused to give way. Mr. Campbell immediately decided that more dynamite was required to solve this dilemma, and packed the holes full. Unfortunately, Campbell got too close while setting off the charge. A witness at the scene said Campbell and the stump were both propelled several feet into the air, leaving Campbell unconscious and badly bruised, but definitely a little wiser.

Later in 1910, the city purchased 300 feet of fire hose and an Anderson nozzle and approved the attendance of two firemen at the Pena Fire Convention. William Brayfield's resignation was accepted on December 15, 1910.

Pinckneyville firemen started 1911 by attending the biggest fire convention yet in Peru, where 200 people were in attendance.

February brought a fire at the Arthur Quick residence. The fire, which originated in the flue, totally destroyed the home. No one blamed the fire boys, but the regular team, which was trained for emergencies, was out of the barn at the time of the alarm. Firemen were credited with saving the piano and organ, however.

In May the fire horses were moved from the A. Davidson ground to the Ed Bartle pasture (this is the pasture north of East Water Street and east of North Beaucoup Street).

Jacob Doerr was furnishing the fire horse team at this time and was also in charge of maintenance on the water tower. William Dedman joined the department in August.

### Membership of the Fire Department — 1909

Chief George R. Gruner  
Assistant Chief George Brayfield  
Secretary J.N. Taffee  
Sam Brayfield  
George Campbell  
Charles Doerr  
Harry Hickman  
J.M. Prihers Jr.  
William Roden  
Jake Sattler  
J.C. Thetford

*Note: Only Jake Sattler, J.C. Thetford, Chief George R. Gruner and William Roden (who officially became a fireman because his team was now kept in the firehouse at night) were on the department five years earlier.*

In October 1912, the Pinckneyville city council authorized Fire Chief Campbell to notify the owner of the frame building located south of Mildly and Neising's Clothing Store to remove or repair the structure, because it was endangering the surrounding property.

The Marissa Fire Department requested the Pinckneyville Fire Department to be present at Marissa's meeting to organize its department. Chief Andrew Grant Campbell,

George Fulton, Lee Thetford, Charles Doerr and William Dedman attended the meeting with a copy of the Pinckneyville department's rules and regulations so that Marissa could pattern its department after Pinckneyville's.

According to the November Advocate, after Dale Pillar's residence caught fire, the Pinckneyville Fire Department put the blaze out in less than

five minutes. The Advocate went on to say that Pinckneyville "should be proud of our fire laddies and up-to-date fire department. We are sure we have one of the best fire outfits of any town in Southern Illinois."

William Dedman and George Fulton both resigned from the department in late 1912. A.L. Steber became a member to fill the vacancy.

In January 1913, J.M. Priliers Jr. and Peter Baker were expelled from the department for failure to attend one regular meeting out of three, in accordance with the by-laws.

*At the March  
city council meeting,  
replacing the  
fire department's  
team of horses  
with a team  
of donkeys  
was discussed.*

An election of officers was held in March, with Andrew Grant Campbell remaining the town's eighth chief. J.C. "Lum" Thetford became the assistant chief, and Jacob Doerr became secretary of the fire department. At the March city council meeting, replacing the fire department's team of horses ("Judge" and "Governor") with a team of donkeys was discussed. The motion was tabled, since the fire department's horse team was the pride of the city.

In late 1914, 500 feet of single-jacket hose was purchased. The fire station was painted, and a dozen rubber boots were also purchased.

An automatic drop harness was added to the firehouse in 1915. Building ordinance #14 was adopted by the city, stating that all buildings in the fire limits are to be constructed of stone, concrete or brick.

The spring of 1916 brought the fireman great tragedy and sorrow. A fire on March 17 at Constable Arthur Desrocher's residence, located 7 miles south of the city, resulted in the death of the constable's 4-year-old son. A fire of unknown origin that started in the bottom floor had trapped the child in the upper story.

In 1919, the city decided to sell the fire wagon. It was becoming evident that the days of horse-drawn wagons were about to end. March 5, 1920 marked the last great fire attended by the horses. Mrs. Nowards's Boarding House and residence burned in a spectacular early morning fire. (Note: If you refer to the early picture of Walnut Street, this is the last double-story building, located approximately where Charles Kurt Western Auto is now located.) This fire resulted in \$4,000 in damage. March 27, 1920 ended the fire horses' days with the department, as the team was sold to buy fire hose. George Gruner carried out the horses' water trough, and the era of the fire engines began. ♦



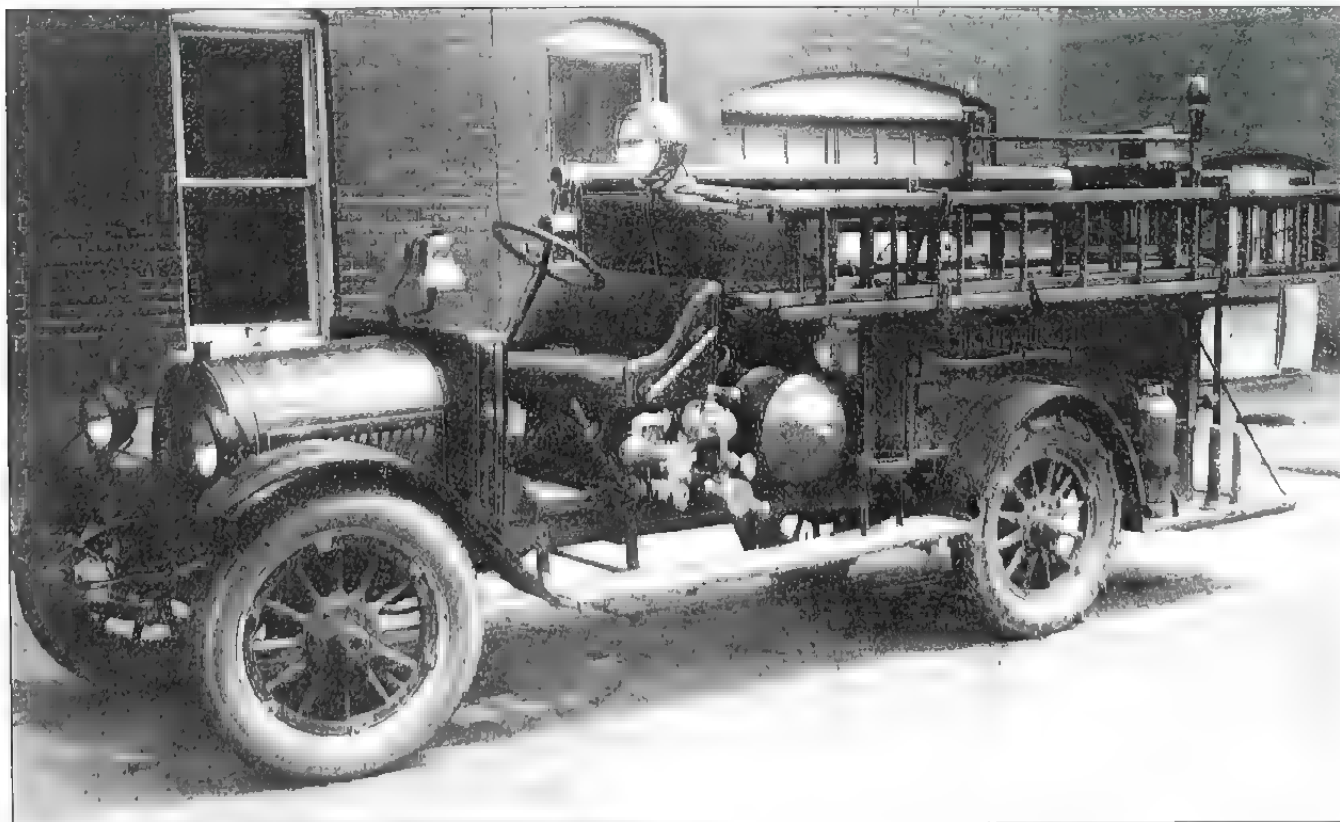
# Going Gas

CHEMICAL ENGINES WERE SMALL, QUICK-INTO-SERVICE ENGINES USED FROM THE 1870S TO THE 1930S. THEY CAME IN HAND-DRAWN, HORSE-DRAWN OR MOTORIZED FORMS. THESE ENGINES HAD NO PUMPS, SO THERE WAS NO WAITING FOR STEAM TO BUILD UP AS WITH STEAMERS. THEY USUALLY HAD SMALL, 35- TO 80 GALLON TANKS OF SODA WATER ON BOARD.

**T**he engine would be positioned where it was needed, sulfuric acid would be released to pressurize the soda water and 175 PSI would instantly be reached via the chemical reaction. There was no drafting water, very low maintenance was required, and only two men were needed to operate the

engine. The days of the chemical engines were fairly short lived, however, as booster tank engines would bring about the end of the chemical engine era by the late 1930s.

In April 1920, the city of Pinckneyville voted to buy an Oldsmobile chemical engine. This 1920 Oldsmobile, which cost \$1,300, had a 1-ton chassis and was powered by



1920 Oldsmobile Chemical Engine — Pinckneyville's first fire truck

a four-cylinder gas engine. The rear-drive mechanism was not a drive shaft like cars today but was rather powered by chain and sprocket, like a motorcycle. This would prove to be the Oldsmobile chemical engine's weak spot, as it was repeatedly in the shop for repairs.

In August of 1921, the city experimented with subscription firefighting. Property owners outside city limits were charged \$2 a year for fire protection.

In September, the first drive-sprocket failure on the new truck, which happened after just seven fire calls, cost the city \$86.61.

Five hundred feet of hose for \$325 and two canister-type gas masks were purchased in December.

In 1923, a new roof was installed on the firehouse.

The city purchased 500 feet of hose for \$546.25 from the Diamond Hose Company, and Loren Noward joined the department on December 20.

A large fire hit the Community Hospital, located on St. Louis Street, on February 12, 1924. The fire started in a defective flue and quickly ignited the roof. The fire truck's chemical tanks were quickly emptied, and firefighters had to lay 1,500 feet of hose from hydrants. In 1924, there were 22 fires with a total of \$6,345 in property loss — \$5,000 from the Community Hospital fire alone. As a result of this fire, a \$1,650 rotary pump was purchased for the fire truck.

The year 1925 began with the Winkle School fire. The school completely burned down, but firemen and rural residents were able to save some of the

building's contents. A fireman's dance was held on January 30 at the opera house to compensate the firemen, who had not received any pay from the city for some time. One hundred and fifty dollars were raised.

In March, firemen gave \$35 to help two fellow firefighters from Murphysboro who were impacted by the great tornado. Frank Engler had a creamery fire in May, which resulted in \$3,000 in property loss. Firemen laid 800 feet of hose and used their rotary pump to boost water pressure from the hydrant.

The Oldsmobile went to the garage for chain repair in June. City officials called a special meeting on November 2, instructing the "fire boys" to attend. The city was going to buy another chemical engine —

without chain drive — and wanted to know if the firemen preferred a Ford or a Chevrolet. A.G. Campbell immediately told the council they were in favor of the Chevrolet. The new truck, from General Manufacturing Company of St. Louis, Missouri, cost \$758.38.

*A large fire  
hit the  
Community  
Hospital.  
It started  
in a defective  
flue and  
quickly ignited  
the roof.*

#### **Membership of the Fire Department — 1926**

Chief A.G. Campbell  
Assistant Chief J.C. Thetford  
Secretary Jacob Doerr  
Ward Campbell  
Charles Doerr  
George Gruner  
Harry Hickman  
Charles Mathews  
Loren Noward  
Lee Thetford

**October 24, 1926:**

#### **The #5 Mine Fire**

The coal chute of the #5 Mine, located near the present-day entrance to Imperial Heights, caught fire by unknown means, resulting in \$15,000 in damage. Firemen laid out 600 feet of hose. Although the fire closed the mine for some time, the firemen were credited with saving over 100 jobs. On November 9, 1927, firemen were again called to the #5 Mine, this time for a three-hour barn fire.

In 1927, there were 19 fire calls, resulting in \$4,405 in property loss. The department's operating budget was \$895.

In 1928, the operating budget was dropped to \$440, and Ordinance 92C was adopted, allowing 2 percent of city money to be put into the fire department's budget. Robert Rule joined the department in May. In August, sirens for the two trucks were installed.

On May 13, 1929, Samuel Opp became the first Commissioner of Public Health and Safety.

The fire chief's salary was increased to \$40 in 1930. In August, firemen and the city split the cost for 500 feet of 1 and 1/2-inch fire hose.

On November 3, following the Roy Pursell fire at 206 West Grand Avenue, in which fire apparatus had to deal with car traffic en route to the scene, the following notice was printed in the papers:

#### **NOTICE TO CAR DRIVERS:**

**TAKE NOTICE THIS MAY  
SAVE YOU MONEY.**

All drivers not pulling to the curb to stop for the fire department going to a fire and also all cars coming closer than one block of a fire shall be prosecuted to the full extent of the law

This is your last warning.

A.G. Campbell, Fire Chief





*For the 1930s, this truck was state-of-the-art in firefighting.*

In April 1932, while driving the fire truck to respond to a fire, A.G. Campbell would have an accident involving a car driven by Luther Wright.

On January 30, 1931, the Beaucoup Schoolhouse, located west of town (where Fishers junkyard is now), was the site of a three-hour fire. During this blaze, 2,000 gallons of chemicals were used and 400 feet of hose was laid. The fire caused \$1,500 in damages; the value of the property was determined to be \$6500. While fighting the blaze, Charles Mathewss slipped from the icy roof and broke his arm.

In March 1931, the chief's salary was increased to \$50, and Francis Rieth joined the department. Rieth would become chief in 1938.

June brought the purchase of two foamite fire extinguishers and the painting by Charles Zahn of the sign above the firehouse door. Unfortunately, June also brought several serious fires. A large grain elevator fire on June 20 at the Matthew Robb property near Swanwick lit up the midnight sky and resulted in \$10,000 in property loss. Less than 24 hours later, firemen watched helplessly as the Cutler Hotel burned out of control. Francis Rieth was taking notice of all the rural fires; in later years, he would repeatedly lobby for rural fire protection.

Finally, in 1931 the city purchased the Breese Lake Property for a water source

The first three months of 1932 were very uneventful for the department. But that all changed on April 19, when a car driven by the author's great uncle, Luther Wright, collided with the Oldsmobile fire engine, driven by Chief A.G. Campbell. The accident occurred 50 feet west of the four-way on Water Street, as the engine was responding to a fire at Miss Fay Fallon's home on West Water Street. While making the curve from Walnut into Water Street, Campbell lost control and swerved into the Wright vehicle. The collision destroyed the fire engine's pump and 100 feet of chemical hose. Mr. and Mrs. Wright and family, of Route 4, were rushed to Hiller Hospital for treatment. Mrs. Wright had a cut and bruising to her face, and baby Lloyd was treated for a cut on his left side and right hand. They were released after treatment. Luckily, the flue fire at Miss Fallon's home did no damage.

Luther Wright appeared before the city council a week later seeking payment for damages resulting from the incident. He was given \$50. Later in July he was given \$300 by the city — the fire department boys had to return \$150 to the general fund from the 2-percent money.

In May, due to the fire truck's being damaged, firemen were unable to respond to a fire at Todd's Mill. A garage and a smokehouse were destroyed. (Note: The 1925 Chevrolet is not in the

fire house, and the author can find no record of what became of this chemical engine.)

March 26, 1933 marked the end of an era for the department with the death of Fire Chief A.G. Campbell. Campbell had served as fire chief for almost 23 years. As the funeral cortege passed by the firehouse, the bell was tolled in respect for Campbell's service. The funeral was led by the fire truck, draped in black and driven by John Rieth Jr. J.C. Thetford, Harry Hickman, Charles Doerr and Lee Thetford carried the casket.

An election of officers was held on May 11, 1933. Charles Doerr became the ninth fire chief. J.C. "Lum" Thetford was voted assistant chief, and Charles Mathews was elected secretary. Charles Swetzler and Robert Rule joined the department at this time.

June saw the taking of bids for a new truck. A triple-combination Chevy fire truck with a 157" wheelbase and a 350-gallon booster tank was purchased from General Manufacturing Company. This truck marked the end of the chemical engines in Pinckneyville (Pinckneyville's 1933 booster tank truck was purchased in 1952 by Tamaroa to start its own fire department.) This new truck was delivered on September 6, 1933, at a cost of \$2,200. ♣

# Applying New Methods



Roy Lipe, David Kelly and Chuck McElvain  
with Smoke House

*"the city  
purchased the  
Breese Lake  
Property for a  
water source."*

THE BRIAR HILL TIPPLE #5 MINE FIRE WAS THE FIRST NOTABLE EVENT OF 1934. THIS FIRE, OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN, TOOK PLACE ON MARCH 11, 1934 AT 3:30 P.M. THE FIRE STARTED HIGH UP IN THE TIPPLE FRAME. FIREFIGHTERS WERE ABLE TO KNOCK DOWN THE BULK OF THE FIRE IN 30 MINUTES BUT REMAINED ON SCENE FOR SEVERAL HOURS.

Property loss was determined to be at \$1,500. Firemen were credited with saving 125 jobs because of their quick action.

An election of officers took place on July 13. The only change was in the chief's position, which became occupied by George W. Gruner, as Charles Doerr retired. George W. Gruner was the third Gruner to become fire chief. A new roof was

also installed on the firehouse. A rotary pump was purchased for \$435 from Petter Supply Company of Paducah, Kentucky. It was also decided that the Pinckneyville Fire Department would host the Egyptian Firefighters Convention.

In January of 1935, the city bought 300 feet of double-jacketed hose for \$330. In February, licenses were bought for two fire trucks, which the author believes to be the 1933 and 1920 engines. The middle door on the south side of the firehouse was moved to the east side of the building.

The operating budget was \$4,600 in 1935. Broken down to line items, the budget had \$2,000 for payroll, \$2,000 for the equipment fund and \$600 in repair costs. In October, Vern Vanzandt and R.H. Zahn joined the department.

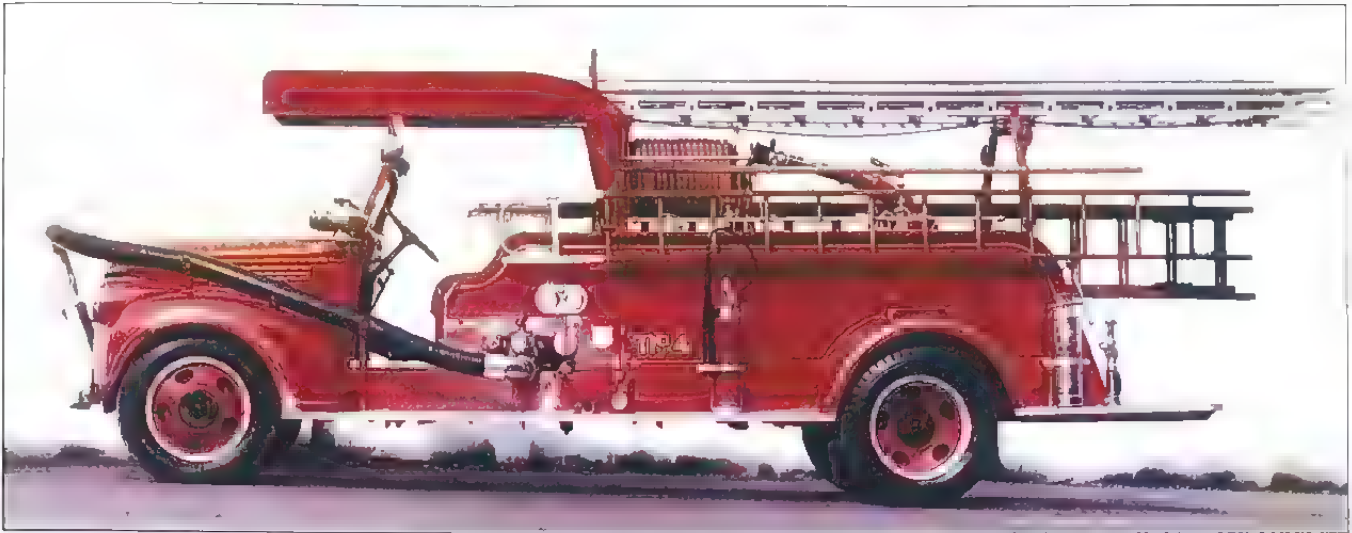
On December 15, 1935, The Steele Shoe repair shop caught fire. This fire, of undetermined origin, resulted in \$1,100 in damage to the framed structure. The alarm was raised by night watchman Ray Taylor. (Note: Night watchmen were employed by the city police to monitor Pinckneyville between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. This practice ended in 1943. In 1894, the night watchman was attached to the fire department to dispatch alarms and for crowd control. The watchman was given a warden's staff for identification. If you look at the picture of the 1909 department on page 11, you can see this staff visible at the back of the hose carriage.)

Mr. Taylor went to investigate what he thought to be an explosion, but he saw no flames. He ran to a restaurant to phone in the alarm. Fire trucks were slow to the scene; it was below freezing in the firehouse because the wood stove had not been banked up. Upon the engine's arrival, flames had gone through the rafters. Firemen were able to extinguish the fire in an hour.

After this fire, the city assigned the city clerks to keep the fire up in the firehouse during business hours, while the night police were responsible for the fire at all other times.

In 1936, there were 44 total fire calls, 12 to locations outside city limits, for a total fire loss of \$1,500. A fundraiser in January raised \$200 for a federal electric siren. The first person to sound the siren was a Mr. Wilson, who originally hung the fire bell.





1941 Chevrolet Fire Engine with banger ladders, a 500-GPM pump and a 200-gallon booster tank.

In May, a fire in downtown Elkhaville sent the 1933 pumper on a mutual-aid run. This fire resulted in \$20,000 in property loss, as five buildings were destroyed. Francis Rieth Jr. was injured in this fire.

During the first months of 1937, 200 feet of 2.5-inch hose was purchased. Fire codes were strengthened, and a dog was kept in the firehouse. In May, a firefighting class was given on glass grenade use. City officials were so impressed by the demonstration they ordered a dozen; later, a chemical grenade was used to put out a fire in a film projector in the Capitol Theater building.

October brought sorrow to the department once more, as former chief George R. Gruner departed this world.

December closed the year with the city proclaiming J.C. "Lum" Thetford and Harry Hickman Honorary Firemen of the City of Pinckneyville during their lifetimes. They were entitled to receive the same compensation and money as other department members, and were to have all privileges and rights except riding on fire trucks. In truth, Thetford and Hickman were getting older, and the city council was worried that something would happen to them. They were put on the none-active list in January 1938, but this didn't stop them. J.C. Thetford remained with the department 45 years until his death in 1943. He served as assistant chief until 1942. Harry Hickman stayed with the department until he reached age 80 in December 1946. Hickman served 37 years on the department.

*The fire department's first fish fry was held at Twin Oaks Cabin on Beaucoup Creek, with about 40 people in attendance, on June 19, 1939.*

Safety and prevention took center stage in 1938, as the city made fire codes stronger. The Department of Conservation built a fire tower behind Oak Grove Church, and city employees were mandated to pass a first-aid class. On May 11, Frances Rieth became fire chief and immediately started to lobby for rural fire protection. Boots and two-canister gas masks were purchased by the fire department on December 10.

A mutual-aid call was answered by the Pinckneyville Fire Department (P.F.D.) to Oakdale for a fire at a single-story brick building housing a grocery store and dentist's office. The fire started when a stove exploded. The structure was fully involved when P.F.D. made a 20-minute, 16-mile run. The mayor of Oakdale commended the P.F.D. for saving the town.

The fire department's first fish fry was held at Twin Oaks Cabin on Beaucoup Creek, with about 40 people in attendance, on June 19, 1939.

The Cross Baptist Church fire, on September 30, started in a nearby residence and spread to the church, destroying the 1907 structure. There was no water supply available, and no fire attack was made because the fire already had tremendous headway upon the department's arrival. This call prompted the city government to decide that no rural calls would be answered.

On October 31, the Egyptian Firefighters Convention was held at the courthouse in Pinckneyville. Chief Rieth lobbied all farmers to attend, in hopes of organizing rural fire protection. On New Year's Eve, the alarm sounded for a fire at the First Baptist Church. Located at St. Louis and Mill streets, the \$20,000 structure received \$4,500 in damage. The fire started in the flue and quickly spread. A total of 2,500 feet of hose was laid out, and 130 feet of ladders were utilized at the blaze. The DuQuoin Fire Department responded for mutual aid. ♠

# Big Loss To Small Town

## Membership of the Fire Department — 1940

Chief Francis Rieth  
Assistant Chief J.C. Thetford  
Secretary Charles Mathews  
George W. Gruner Jr.  
Harry Hickman  
Loren Noward  
Lee Rice  
Robert Rule  
Charles "Patches" Swetzer  
Lee Thetford  
George Ulrich

## January 1940:

### The Elmer Keene Store Fire

On January 13, 1940, the Elmer Keene Store caught fire. The 3:00 a.m. blaze destroyed the Califo Market Building, valued at \$2,000 and with \$6,000 in contents. The cause of the fire was undetermined.

Also in 1940, 10 bunker suits were purchased at a cost of \$120 each. The department also purchased a quantity of hose from the Quaker City Rubber Company. The chief and assistant chief attended the Murphysboro Firefighters Convention in December.

At this time, the city authorized the purchase of a new truck chassis from Brown Chevrolet Company, with the body and other equipment to come from The Central Fire Truck Company of St. Louis. The truck was to have a 500-gallon-per-minute (G.P.M.) pump and a 200-gallon booster tank. The truck arrived March 5, 1941 and was immediately put under a six-hour pump test, in which 625 G.P.M. were obtained. The new truck was complemented with 800 feet of 2.5-inch hose, 200 feet of 1.5-inch hose and a 150-foot booster reel. The total cost of the 1941 pumper was \$5,000.

Two firemen, William Cunningham Jr. and Jake Bender, joined the depart-

ment in 1941. The big fire of the year occurred at Farmer's Store, an 18-foot by 90-foot building located on West Randolph Street. There was \$2,200 in damage to the structure.

The present-day City Lake was completed in February 1942. On March 7, 1942, a fire of unknown origin struck the Briar Hill #5 Mine. The engine house and boiler room received \$10,000 in damage. The mine had been in operation since 1907 and employed 62 workers at the time of the fire.

On May 5, fire again hit the square as Mrs. Earl Miller's Restaurant, located on the west side of the square, caught fire. This two-story building, owned by Mrs. Carrie Davison, was extremely damaged by a fire of unknown origin. A quick blitz attack by firemen is credited with saving the building.

In August, Rudy Kolhsdorf and Charles Ritter joined the department. Francis Rieth took a leave of absence, and George Gruner became acting chief on October 12.

On April 26, 1943, J.C. Thetford went on his last fire call. He died on May 30 of that year. Thetford had been on the department since 1898.

In May, Francis Rieth returned as chief, and George Gruner took J.C. Thetford's spot as assistant chief. September 28 marked the last time Pinckneyville would have a night watchman — Charles Dailey. The city decided in November to once again make out-of-town calls with the 1933 pumper. In December, a fish fry was held.

In March of 1944, breathing apparatus were purchased from Mine Safety Appliance Company for \$84.50. These are believed to have been of the charcoal-canister type.

### Luther Hutchings Tavern Fire

On March 30, 1944, disastrous fire again hit Pinckneyville. This fire was on the block south of West Chester Street and east of Douglas Street. The Luther

Hutchings Tavern (officially the Hollywood Café) caught fire around 2:45 a.m. The blaze was discovered by two miners on their way to work. Upon the fire department's arrival, the framed roof had fallen in. The fire, fed by an extremely strong wind, quickly spread to the Emil Boquillon Building, occupied by the Steve Reel Service Station, and Hatchery to the west. The fire spread south to the Pinckneyville Ice Plant and then east to the Ratio Williams residence.

The back part of Steve Reels Service Station was used as a grease room, which helped lead the fire to the ice plant. The Ratio Williams residence was completely destroyed. This fire resulted in \$75,250 of damage.

High winds and freezing weather, along with a lack of water, added to the spread of the fire. Two thousand feet of hose was laid out. DuQuoin firefighters manned the empty station house for 14 hours while Pinckneyville firemen were on the scene.

Luther Hutchings Tavern	Undetermined	\$3,500/\$4,000
Ratio Williams Residence	Spread from tavern	\$1,500/\$250
Steve Reel Service Station	Spread from tavern	\$5,500/\$5,500
Pinckneyville Ice Plant	Spread from tavern	\$20,000/\$35,000

The year 1944 ended with Pinckneyville spending \$100,000 to increase the city's water supply. In August, Noel Cooke and Elmer Lee Holman became members of the fire department. On September 14, the annual chicken fry was held at the station, with a crowd of 30 in attendance.

February 1945 sent firemen to the Eddie Bartle residence on Randolph Street. Defective heat pipes were to blame for \$3,300 in property loss. Firemen were on the scene five hours and laid 500 feet of hose.

The booster tank was replaced on the 1941 pumper in October.



### Gruner Hardware Store Fire

On Sunday, December 16, 1945, just before noon, a massive fire struck the north side of the square. The Gruner Hardware Store fire, at 5 West Jackson Street (the area McDaniel's Furniture now occupies), was the scene of the largest reported fire ever to strike Pinckneyville. The Sparta and DuQuoin fire departments were immediately called in to assist. The payroll for this fire, for 15 firemen at \$1 an hour, was \$158. Five large master streams were used for six hours to bring this fire under control.

Occupants	Area Laid (feet)	Cause	Value/Content
Gruner Hardware Store	1,000	Undetermined	\$8,000/\$25,000
K.R. Nesbitt Dry Goods	1,000	Spread from Gruner's	\$250/\$250
M.J. Hirsh Dry Goods	1,000	Spread from Gruner's	\$25/None
E. Whitehorn Variety	1,000	Spread from Gruner's	\$15/None

Surprisingly, this was actually the smallest of four fires in southern Illinois over that weekend. The Gruner Hardware Store fire resulted in \$33,575 in property loss. The weekend total for the four fires was over \$500,000. Murphysboro lost a three-story furniture store, Cairo lost the Junior High School and the J.G. Newberry Manufacturing Company in West Frankfort burned.

The year 1946 was, happily, a quiet one. On May 13, S.C.B.A.'s were purchased from Nordstrom Fire Equipment for \$350. In June, Tom Mann was made a member of the department, while on December 5, Harry Hickman retired at age 80.

### Membership of the Fire Department — 1947

Chief Francis Rieth  
 Assistant Chief George Gruner  
 Secretary Charles Mathews  
     Jake Bender  
     Noel Cooke  
 William Cunningham  
     Charles Doerr  
     Elmer Lee Holman  
     Rudy Kohlsdorf  
     Tom Mann  
     Lee Noward  
     Lee Rice  
     Robert Rule  
 Charles "Patches" Swetzler  
     Lee Thetford  
     George Ulrich



*Gruner Hardware Store 1945*



*Gruner Hardware Store 1945*

## 1949

A panel van was purchased in March 1949 to use as an emergency truck. In May, a quantity of 1.5-inch hose was purchased from Fire Safety Equipment for \$125. In November, the Fire Department ordered new raincoats.

June brought two unusual fires. The first was at the Saltzman-Meyer Garage. Pieces of canvas caught fire, and smoke roared from the rear of this downtown building. The smoke got the attention of passersby in town, who swarmed the street and would not disburse. State police had to be called to move the crowd back and get traffic moving.

The second fire was in the Pinckneyville Community High School Gymnasium. This very smoky, hard-to-reach fire caused \$2,000 in damage to the north end of the building. Hand extinguishers were employed to put the blaze out, and the DuQuoin Fire Department was called in for mutual assistance.

On July 26, Ordinance #124 passed the city council, establishing a municipal fire department for the city and providing for its operation and maintenance. Public Health and Safety Commissioner William J. Cunningham sponsored this bill. This made the fire department totally governed by the city;

this would later lead to some tension, with Mayor Cunningham directly in the middle of things. The Fireman's Association was an offshoot of this ordinance, which troubled Mayor Cunningham, who felt the city should be the only entity directing the fire department.

A portable generator and 14 blue lights were also purchased by the department in 1949.

### Membership of the Fire Department — 1950

Chief Francis Rieth  
Assistant Chief George Gruner  
Jake Bender  
Charles Doerr  
Elmer Lee Holman  
Rudy Kohlsdorf  
Hugh Malan  
Tom Mann  
Don Noward  
Lee Noward  
Lee Rice  
Robert Rule  
Charles Swetzeler  
Lee Thetford  
George Ulrich

Don Noward and George Ulrich were later dropped from the department; Don Noward moved from town, and George Ulrich was made an honorary fireman. George Ulrich was on the department for 10 years. Jim Ritter and Sam Hiller became members to fill these vacancies.

## 1950

In the spring of 1950, a second booster tank was put on the 1941 pumper for \$214.50. One Scott air pack was purchased, and the firemen held a chicken fry fundraiser. Pinckneyville also responded in mutual aid to DuQuoin at the L. Bridges residence. The DuQuoin truck was in Benton at the time of the fire; there was \$6,000 in property loss.

Ace Welding Company filled the department's air packs in 1951 because very few places had compressors capable of reaching the 2,250 p.s.i. needed to fill the air bottles. In May, the fire department's phone was moved to Pyatt's Funeral Home because someone was there 24 hours a day. In September, Lee Noward resigned, and Lestro Forelch and Harlan "Shine" Yeager became members. December brought Resolution #11, authorizing the sale of the 1933 Chevrolet fire truck, 350 feet of 2.5-inch hose and 200 feet of 1.5-inch hose to Tamaroa for \$1,200.

January of 1952 started with the Roy Chenoweth fire. The small residence was destroyed by a blaze originating in the wood burner flue. The fire resulted in \$9,000 in property loss.

The city received six bids for a new fire truck. The new 1952 Chevrolet pumper would have a Brown chassis (2 tons, 105 hp) and a Central Fire Truck Corp. body, with a total cost of \$7,797.50. Other equipment purchased in 1952 included fog nozzles, a Siamese connector and a spare air cylinder. The Neon Sign Company also records a bill for work on the fire department's sign.

In January of 1953, the department welcomed three new members. Joe Williamson and John Sifert of the night police became members, as did Dick Pyatt, who dispatched calls from Pyatt's Funeral Home. Badges were purchased from S.H. Reese Company for \$43. A collection drive to purchase an iron lung for the emergency truck was also launched. The drive not only brought in enough money for the iron lung, but also an additional \$350 that was used for equipment to complement it. On September 21, the city passed Ordinance #153, strengthening 1906 codes. December brought the resignation of two firemen, Lee Rice and Noel Cooke. Halleck Reese and Dale Biby were made members to fill up the roster. A new constitution of bylaws completed the year.

On April 30, 1954, a special meeting on possible fundraisers for radio equipment was quickly adjourned when the fire whistle began to sound all by itself. Later it was discovered that the whistle had been activated by faulty wiring. Before the meeting came to its rapid end, it had been decided to raise money by giving fire truck rides at the fair and by offering to man the gates for 5 percent of each day's take-in.

The year ended with the prospects of a new department being formed for rural protection. If a tax proposal passed, then a brand-new department would be created, sharing the same staff and paying rent to the city for housing its equipment. ♦



# Separate Departments Pull Resources

1955:

## The Tale of Two Departments

April 4, 1955 ushered in a new chapter in firefighting, as The Rural Fire Protection District was established by a vote of the people. A board of trustees appointed by Perry County Judge Grabowski oversaw this department. The first president was William H. Schrader, with Bernard Kellerman as the first vice president and Edward C. Timpner as the first secretary. The board of trustees then appointed Fred Beck as its treasurer. After all his years campaigning for rural coverage, John Francis Rieth was appointed as chief of the new department.

*new department  
being formed for  
rural protection*

It was also decided to share manpower between the two departments. The first truck, a 1955 Chevy pumper, was purchased from Hubler Motors of Pinckneyville and equipped by Towers Fire Apparatus of Freeburg, Illinois. The department was housed in the north side of the Fire Department Building for \$100 a month rent.

An April fish fry made \$101.36 in profits. The iron lung was also used for the first time in July on an emergency call in which the patient had taken an overdose of sleeping pills. In October, Herbert Roethe became a member of the department.

In 1956, the fire department responded to 107 calls — the largest yearly total to date, although it should be remembered that the city now had rural fire protection. The biggest fire of



Members of the '58 Pinckneyville Fire Department, Back Row: Chief Francis Rieth, Jim Cavanaugh, Harold Valentine, Jerry Price, Virgil Jausel, Don Kellerman, Jack Smith, Maurice Keller and Charles Schwetzler. Front Row: Owen Loos, Assistant Chief Harlan Yeager, Elvis Pick, Jim Rutter, Halleck Reese, Bill Koenigstein, Wilber "Beak" McCrary and Herb Roethe

*a heated  
argument broke  
out over an  
officer's election*

**Membership of the  
Fire Department — 1959**

Chief Francis Rieth  
Assistant Chief  
Harlan "Shine" Yeager  
Jake Bender  
James Cavanaugh  
Charles Doerr  
Lestro Forelch  
George Gruner  
Sam Hiller  
E. mer Lee Holman  
Jousel  
Don Keller  
Marvin Keller  
Rudy Kohlsdorf  
Bill Kolneqstein  
Oren Loos  
Hugh Malan  
Tom Mann  
Mathews  
McCrarv  
James Pick  
Dick Pyatt  
Halleck Reese  
Jim Ritter  
Herbert Roethe  
Robert Rule  
John Sifert  
Charles Swetzeler  
Lee Thetford  
Joe Williamson  
George Ulrich

the year was at the Schumpski General Store. This fire resulted in \$10,000 in damage and kept fire apparatus on the scene for three hours.

In January, a bunker coat and pants were purchased for \$31 from Janesville Apparel Company. A new lease between the city and the Rural Fire Department was agreed upon. In March, James Pick became a member. The April fish fry made \$123 in profit. In September, the kindergarten class visited the fire department for the first time.

Notable events of 1957 included the decision to make the fish fry an annual Good Friday event. Association meetings would henceforth be held on the second Wednesday of the month. James Cavanaugh became a member on June 6. A water extension project eastward on Route 154 was begun, and a Motorola radio system was installed in the firehouse in October. Francis Rieth's pay was raised to \$65 a month.

There were two big fires in 1957. Three thousand dollars in damage was caused by a fire at Mrs. Charles Loos' residence on South Main Street. This fire resulted when coal oil was introduced to a hot stove. The other fire involved two structures, the Keene Trucking Company and Mrs. Lizzy Hale's residence on Gordon Street. A shed and garage were destroyed in this October fire, resulting in \$4,850 in

damage. Firemen used 600 feet of 2.5-inch hose fighting this blaze.

On April 5, a rash of tornados hit very close to Pinckneyville. The G.S. Metals and M.U.M.S. buildings received some damage from two funnel clouds. The bulk of the damage occurred at the intersection of Routes 154 and 51. This incident prompted the scattering of trucks to monitor severe weather. Also in April, the fire department was asked to render mutual aid to fight the Nashville Grade School Fire.

The first part of 1958 found Pinckneyville with three new firemen: Marvin Keller, Dale Biby and Bill Kolneqstein. February 3 brought the Donald Carson fire on Wilson Street. This fire started in the flue and resulted in \$5,050 in damage. Three thousand gallons of water were used to control the blaze. During the fire, Chief Rieth suffered smoke inhalation, and Wilber McCrary received a hand injury.

On May 6, firemen were called to the Forest City Manufacturing Company (Garment Factory), located at First and South Streets. A garage and shed burned during this four-hour fire call. Seventeen hundred gallons of water was used, and DuQuoin Fire Department was requested to lend mutual aid. Also in May, mobile radio equipment was purchased for \$1,300. Shine Yeager became assistant chief, and Oren Loos joined the department. In July, a flood struck the firehouse in the early hours one morning around 2:00 a.m. The trucks took five hours to pump out the water.

1957 Rural Pumper





November 10 brought both good and bad news to the firehouse. The Illinois Inspection Bureau classified the rural department an A-plus department. Sadly, the accomplishment was clouded by the death of Rudy Kohlsdorf, who had been on the department since 1942.

The year 1959 opened with the city purchasing a \$3,800 emergency truck from Hubler Motor Sales of Pinckneyville. The annual fish fry was a great success. Workers prepared 538 pounds of fish and made \$338.38 — a 47 percent profit.

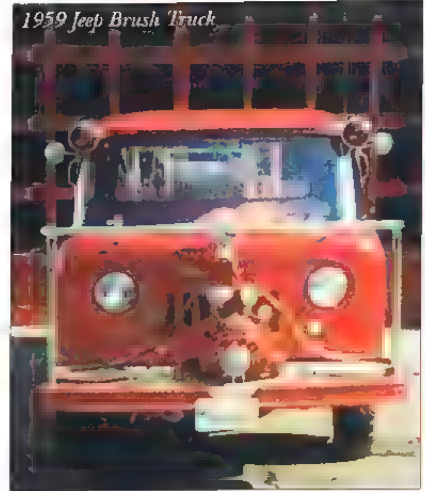
At the May Association meeting, a heated argument broke out over an officer's election. Chief Rieth and Dale Biby squared off and had to be separated. Biby left the meeting, and Chief Rieth had his name removed. Don Keller became a member of the department to fill the vacancy.

July saw the emergency truck put to use for the recovery of three men who drowned in the north end of the city lake. It took six hours to retrieve all the bodies. Illinois State Police reimbursed the department \$150 for the call.

In October, a new Jeep brush truck was delivered to the rural department. It was a four-wheel-drive cab with a front-mounted pump and a 200-gallon booster tank. Jack Smith joined the department in this month.

The year ended with the Pentecostal Church fire at First and South Street. During this four-hour call, Fire Chief Rieth backed the 1952 pumper into a State Police squad car!

The early part of 1960 was uneventful. The library board bought the fire department a neon sign that they proudly displayed above the city door. A water tower was built next to the railroad for \$53,640.





March 8, 1960 – Beaucoup Baptist Church Fire

### Beaucoup Baptist Church Fire

On March 8, 1960, the Beaucoup Baptist Church fire completely changed the pleasant tone the firemen had been enjoying the first two months of the year. Reverend Mathenia called in this fire at 10:30 p.m., at the end of a blizzard that engulfed southern Illinois.

Fourteen inches of snow fell throughout the night while this fire lit up the west side of town. The fire, which was believed to have started in the furnace, quickly raced up the bell tower. The DuQuoin Fire Department was summoned for mutual aid. Many of the congregation's members scrambled from the adjacent education building to the fire building

and shoveled snow to try and douse the blaze. These brave men also removed two 100-pound propane cylinders before the fire department's arrival.

The fire scene was chaos to navigate; cars of concerned congregational members were everywhere. Only the 1941 Chevy pumper was small enough to

weave through the cars that choked the fire scene. The 1955 pumper, the 1952 pumper and the 1960 Jeep were forced to cross a ditch to gain access. All vehicles received damage in doing so, but fortunately, their use enabled firefighters to save surrounding structures. Firemen battled the blaze until three in the morning.

Once again, on May 1, a church building was threatened by fire, as was the pastor's automobile. Some \$14,000 in damage resulted from the blaze, which left firemen on scene for six hours and destroyed the Todd's Mill Parsonage.

Other notable events of a less disastrous nature also took place in 1960. The fish fry made nearly \$800. A portable power unit and a water curtain were purchased. In June, firemen were ordered to paint their helmets yellow and were given shoulder patches. Jerry Price became a member. The Egyptian Firefighters Association held their October meeting in Pinckneyville.

A very quiet 1961 followed. There were no large fires, but fireman received \$2 per call for rural fires. The city, in turn, agreed to pay \$1.50 per call to its members. Tom Mann was removed from the department for violation of Article #5 Section 3 of the bylaws, due to an attendance problem.

The year 1962 was very quiet as well. Harold "Tiny" Valentine was made a member in May. In June, firemen purchased a 14-foot boat, motor and trailer for \$387. Invalid stickers were put on appropriate houses in July. In September, state police requested Pinckneyville firemen to assist with a car fire at Pyatt's Wye. Upon arrival, firemen learned that the car belonged to Illinois Governor Calanhan. He was very grateful to our firemen for their assistance.

In February 1963, the city received a \$30,500 grant to remodel City Hall and the fire station. The department also welcomed three new members: Lee Kuhnert, James Beaty and Bill Barr. In March, the Illinois Inspection and Rating Bureau gave the city a class 6 fire rating, leading to a reduction in city taxpayers' fire insurance rates.

Trouble began brewing between the fire department and city government. On May 8, Mayor Cunningham

*Trouble began  
brewing between the  
fire department and  
city government*



informed the Association membership, "We don't have any say so in who belongs to the fire department. Our CLUB and its officers have no authority outside our meetings."

Cunningham noted that the mayor could appoint a person to the fire department, but that person would not have to belong to the Association. Cunningham asserted that "a list will be posted in the fire department, and if a member of the Association's name does not appear on it, they are not covered by insurance and are not to answer any city fire call."

A motion was then made to wait until the city picked the fire chief and established the fire department's chain of command before the Association could conduct its election. This motion carried unanimously.

It is worthy of note that 14 years earlier, the city established a municipal fire department, when Bill Cunningham was the Public Health and Safety Commissioner. Cunningham was now the mayor, and didn't want anybody else telling him how to run his town. Remember that Bill Cunningham was a member of the department until 1961. Years later, on June 1, 1985, the State Police will nearly arrest Mayor Cunningham for interfering with a police/fire rescue operation on Walnut Street.

#### **Membership of the Fire Department — 1964**

Bill Barr  
James Beaty  
James Cavanaugh  
Virgil Jausel  
Bill Kolnegstein  
Lee Kuhnert  
Oren Loos  
Charles Mathews  
Wilbur McCrary  
Loren Noward  
Elvis Pick  
Maurice Pyatt  
Jim Ritter  
Herbert Roethe  
Charles Schwetzler  
Harold Valentine  
Harlan "Shine" Yeager

1965 Chevy City Pumper With Banger Ladders



A new set of bylaws for the Association was drawn up and accepted following a posting of the names of those remaining in the department. Globe Industrial of Henderson, Kentucky, was awarded the contract for the removal of the water tower from behind the firehouse for a cost of \$2,615. A frequency change for the Motorola radios was also made in December.

With just 17 men remaining on the roster, the 1964 Good Friday fish fry had to be cancelled due to a lack of manpower. The city again asked for bids on a new fire truck. Two bids were received and rejected, just as in May 1961.

In 1965, the membership decided to again hold the annual fish fry. The general public wished the event to continue, which influenced this vote.

The city again asked for bids on the fire truck, a triple-combination Chevrolet pumper, in 1965. The bids chosen came from Hubler Motor Sales and Towers Fire Apparatus, for a total cost of \$17,847.28 when delivered.

Among other notable events of 1965, the department added to its roster, and a radio was purchased for the chief's car. The city adopted stronger fire codes, and pay per call for the firemen was raised to \$5.

*Cunningham was now the mayor, and didn't want anybody else telling him how to run his town.*

The roster of members was brought up to 22 by 1966; it was increased to 29 by 1967. The 40 city fire calls of 1966 quickly made seasoned veterans out of most of the 12 new members of the department. These newest members included Herman Beck, George Engelhardt, Louis Feltmeyer, James Jones, Maurice Keller, Leo Morski, Enoch Olsen, Theo Pick, Harold Schrader, Jerry M. Smith, Bill Schrader and Allen Davis.

On May 21, shortly after engine four arrived in the firehouse, it was requested to assist an overturned gasoline tanker downtown on the square. There was no fire at this accident; however, gasoline did leak from the container. It was cleaned up without incident.

On July 26, a three-hour fire struck the fairgrounds, and a cattle barn burned to the ground. A tractor and wagon were also lost in this incident.

November 5 brought the biggest fire of the year, at the Pinckneyville Community Hospital on North Walnut Street. Firemen responded from Pinckneyville City, Pinckneyville Rural, DuQuoin, Sparta, Christopher, Carbondale and West Frankfort. (West Frankfort was not called but responded anyway.) It was believed that the fire started in a chair that was ignited by careless smoking materials. This resulted in heavy, cobweb-type smoke, which forced a mass evacuation of the facility.

During this call, the 50-foot banger ladder was used by Harold (Tiny) Valentine to perform a rescue. Five 30-foot ladders were also utilized. During the course of the call, fireman Bill Barr fell from the roof to the ground on the northeast side of the building. Fortunately, he was not seriously hurt and immediately climbed back up to the roof. Some of the furniture from the actual room where the fire started occupied the firehouse communication room for many years.

The tradition of the fish fry was continued in 1966; the event made \$560 in profit. The Pinckneyville Fire Department also joined Coal Belt Firefighter's Association on June 8.

The annual fish fry grew vigorously in 1967, netting \$1,500 in profits, which were used to buy a television set for the training room. Lee Thetford was named an Honorary Member of the department. Lee had joined the department on August 5, 1909 and retired in 1959 after 50 years of service. He had also held the rank of assistant chief during his career. Happily, 1967 was a quiet year for the department; the most noteworthy incident that year was an emergency call to the Vallie West residence on East Street to extricate a 3-year-old from a locked bathroom.

Many notable events occurred in 1968. On April 24, Charles Schwebel joined the department. Attorneys met with the city council, Perry County



*Pinckneyville Fire Department's Annual Fish Fry*

officials, city police, county police and the Pinckneyville City Fire Department about radio and phone service, so they could offer complete, 24-hour service to citizens. In May, the \$1,000 profit from Good Friday's Fish Fry was used to buy a cable reel, a chain saw and uniform shirts for department members.

The city council meeting of September 3 saw the resignation of Fire Chief John Francis Rieth. Rieth joined the department on May 4, 1931 and became chief on May 11, 1938. On August 10, 1962, he fell from the old Capitol Theater. He never totally recovered from this fall, and his injuries forced him to resign his duties as chief.

### **B.C. Christopher Company Mill Fire**

On September 26, 1968, the worst fire to strike Pinckneyville in 20 years lit up the midnight sky. The blaze could be seen as far away as Murphysboro. This was the B.C. Christopher Company Mill fire at Ozburn and Douglas Street. Oddly enough, my father, Fred Dean Bardle, reported this blaze.

Fred was returning from Captain Mine, where he had just completed his evening shift, when he spotted the blaze from just south of town. City newspapers record my father as being a firefighter for the city; in fact, he never served with the department. He spotted the blaze and traced it to the mill. Upon his arrival, the fire was breaching the mill's auger-retrieving bay; the fire probably started from spontaneous combustion. Only after he was unable to raise any workers at the scene did Fred turn in the alarm. This 90,000-bushel mill was at about 10 percent of its storage capacity at the time of the fire.



*B.C. Christopher Company Mill at the height of the blaze*



Firemen arrived on the scene at about 12:30 a.m. The fire soon spread across to the seed processing area and then threatened the mill's office building. The main office building was spared when George Engelhardt single-handedly hustled a 1.5-inch hose line up a ladder into the building, dousing the blaze. Soon all seven city and rural trucks were on the scene, and mutual aid was requested from the DuQuoin, Sparta, Murphysboro, Elkhart, Carbondale, Nashville, Christopher and Coulterville fire departments. Fifty-two firemen fought this blaze, working past 3:00 a.m. Crews remained on the scene until 10:00 p.m. on September 30, when this blaze was officially declared to be out.

This fire resulted in \$112,000 in loss. The payroll cost to the city for the firemen's time was \$562.50. Some 2,700 feet of 2.5-inch hose was laid on the ground, supplying 200,000 gallons of water. It was reported that, at the height



of the blaze, sheets of tin broke loose from the structure and were thrown hundreds of feet into the air by the fire draft. These sheets came crashing down, endangering spectators and firemen alike.

Harlan (Shine) Yeager took over as chief on the first day of October. Jerry M. Smith was appointed assistant chief at Yeager's request. Even though Jerry had only been in the department since 1966, his enthusiasm for being a fireman was immediately noticed by the new chief.

On November 9, Harlan and Jerry were part of one of the stranger calls the department had faced to date. Mrs. Mary Robb called in an explosion at the George Vordtriede property. Upon the department's arrival, there was no smoke, no fire — not even any debris. Mrs. Robb had evidently mistaken an earthquake for an explosion at her neighbor's property!

The year 1969 was quiet compared to 1968. The department bought a boat motor with the profits from the fish fry. In July, the city passed Ordinance #06-60-12, which established permitted burning hours within city limits; burning could only be conducted between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. The Coal Belt meeting was held in Pinckneyville on September 4.

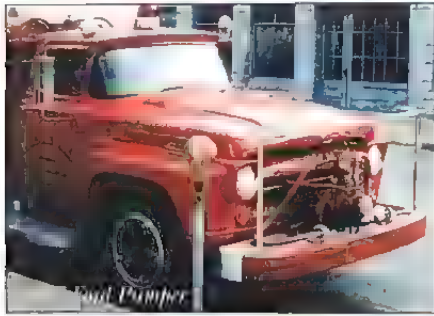
The two big fires of 1969 happened early in the year. The Vernon Hubler residence was the location of the first fire, on January 7. This fire destroyed a structure valued at \$16,000. A faulty furnace started the blaze. Six booster reels were employed to battle this fire.

The other large blaze occurred on February 15 at the A.S.C.S. office, located on South Main Street. The structure received \$16,000 in damage.

### Membership of the Fire Department — 1970

Honorary: John Francis Rieth  
Chief Harlan Yeager  
Assistant Chief Jerry M. Smith  
Bill Barr  
James Beaty  
Herman Beck  
Bob Brand  
James Cavanaugh  
Larry Chapman  
Allen Davis  
Gordon Deal  
George Engelhardt  
Louis Feltmeyer  
Kenny Hicks  
Morse Hill  
Virgil Jausel  
Lee Kuhnert  
Donald Lazeon  
Oren Loos  
Wilbert McCrary  
Leo Morski  
Enoch Olson  
Elvis Pick  
Harold Schrader  
Charles Schwetzer  
Gary Trotter  
Harold Valentine

*Mrs. Robb had  
evidently mistaken  
an earthquake for  
an explosion at her  
neighbor's property!*

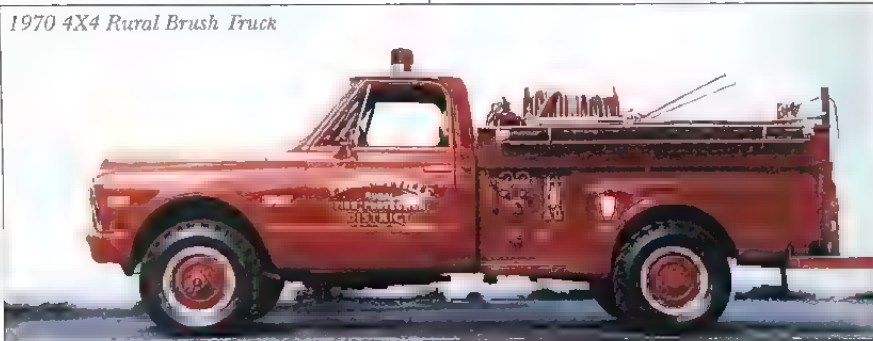


### *The truck sank like a rock*

The large fire of 1970 was at the William Paasch Barn. This barn, located 5.5 miles west of Pinckneyville on Route 154, kept firemen on the scene for 10 hours. The blaze destroyed a \$22,400 structure. It took 1,300 feet of hose just to reach the structure. The 1957 pumper was sent to the pond to supply water during this Valentine's Day fire. The weather was snowy, and the ground was frozen; during the 10 hours the truck was pumping, its engine heat slowly thawed the ground below. The truck sank like a stone and had to be retrieved with a bulldozer.

The new decade introduced Gordon Deal as a member. Lifetime members were also named: Maurice Pyatt, Herbert Roethe and Jim Ritter. A new rural brush truck was delivered on March 2. It was a 1970 Chevy 4 x 4. The city, Rural Department and the Association split the \$695 cost for equipment to complement this unit. A K-12 saw and walkie-talkie were also purchased

1970 4X4 Rural Brush Truck



First-aid training was held in March. It was also decided that the prize for the fair raffle, a mini-bike, should be changed. It seemed the Public Health and Safety Commissioner thought this prize was too dangerous and very inappropriate. Ironically, the prize was changed to a Remington 1100 shotgun!

In August, furniture was purchased for the upstairs lounge. The Association also purchased boots for all its members. Later in the year, four more members were added to the roster: Don Lazon, Maurice Hill, Gary Trotter and Larry Chapman.

In January 1971, the Association bought 85 arm patches. Fair prizes were also announced: a shotgun and a dishwasher. The Association also decided to man a Bozo dunk tank at the fair.

Borrowed from the Elkhville Fire Department, the Bozo tank made \$309.75 in profit, while the raffle made \$374.30 in profit. In September, a Ford power unit pickup truck arrived in the firehouse. Don Yeager painted it for \$25. In October, a stove was purchased for the firehouse kitchen, and in November, Joel Miller became a member.

In January 1972, a smoke ejector was bought for the 1955 pumper. In March, Harlan Yeager went to the Fire Chief Instructor Conference in Kansas City, Mo. At the Association meeting in April, the fine for an accident sustained by Lee Kuhnert while responding to a fire call was paid by the Association. In May, lights for the power unit and a wall air conditioner unit for the training room were purchased. The city bought 250 feet of 2.5-inch hose from B and W Company of DuQuoin in December.

Also in January, firemen started receiving \$3.50 an hour per call. In April 1973, Motorola started installing a \$25,000 radio system for the department. The system included high-band radios, a tower and monitors. In July, the safety seal program was started up again. On August 8, the big fire of the year hit Reban's Drive-In, located on West Water Street next to the grade school. A grease fire was cited as the cause of the blaze. The 1957 pumper's engine blew up on this call.

The city purchased two Scott air packs and two spare bottles for \$975. A 2,000-gallon portable pond and an air compressor to fill air packs were also purchased. Donny Kelley was named an Honorary Member, and Jerry Smith and Charles Schwetzler agreed to paint fire hydrants. In November, the Association purchased bell-top hats for its members.

The year 1973 started with the city spending \$2,000 on equipment; it is not known what was purchased. E.M.T. classes started in January. The fire chief attended the Memphis, Tenn. conference in March. In May, new bylaws for the Association were adopted. In June, Assistant Chief Smith attended the University of Illinois Fire College. July brought a fire at the Frank Bigham Dairy Barn, located just southwest of the fairgrounds. This fire kept crews on the scene for four hours. ♦



# A Tale Of Two Eras

THE WINDSOR HOTEL FIRE, THE BIGGEST FIRE OF 1974, OCCURRED ON AUGUST 11. THE ALARM FOR THIS SUNDAY MORNING FIRE AT MILL AND PARKER STREET RANG OUT AT 2.05 A.M. A FIRE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN STARTED IN A STORAGE ROOM AT THE REAR OF THE TWO-STORY BRICK STRUCTURE. IT QUICKLY SPREAD, GUTTING THE BUILDING, WHICH WAS OWNED BY TYRONE LINDER.

**T**his once-famous Pinckneyville landmark was constructed in 1894 and was formerly known as the Fisher Hotel. It featured 26 luxury suites for travelers coming to town by way of the railroad. This fire resulted in \$24,650 in fire loss. Departments that joined in battling the blaze included Pinckneyville City, Pinckneyville Rural, Elkhart, Tamaroa, DuQuoin, Sparta, Coulterville, Christopher and Valier.

Firemen were on the scene for 15.5 hours. Three city pumpers and two rural pumpers were fed by 4,400 feet of 2.5-inch hose and 1,500 feet of 1.5-inch hose. Booster lines were used to protect exposures. A \$759.50 payroll, for 217 man-hours by Pinckneyville firemen at \$3.50 per hour, was documented. ♠



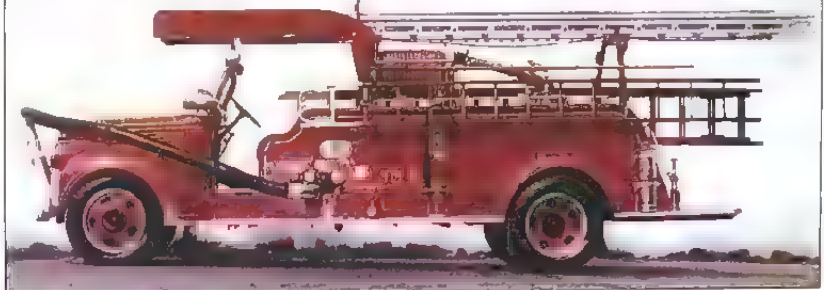
*Windsor Hotel and Restaurant: Before fire about 1894*



*Windsor Hotel and Tavern  
After the August 11, 1974 fire*

# A New Frontier

1941 Chevrolet Fire Truck



THE LAST QUARTER OF THE CENTURY BROUGHT ABOUT MANY CHANGES IN FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS. THE

FIREMEN OF THE OLD DAYS WERE KNOWN AS "SMOKE EATERS." TODAY, ALL FIRE CALLS REQUIRE THAT SELF-CONTAINED BREATHING APPARATUS BE WORN. THE BOOSTER LINE FIREFIGHTING CONCEPTS OF WORLD WAR II HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY A VERY AGGRESSIVE INTERIOR ATTACK AND A COMBINED VENTILATION TECHNIQUE. THE PINCKNEYVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT BRIEFLY TOOK OVER THE AMBULANCE DUTIES OF THE TOWN; THIS LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR WHAT IS TODAY A TAXED-BASED, COUNTYWIDE AMBULANCE SERVICE.

In January 1975, a change was made in training sessions to accommodate those working the evening shift. Training was now held both mornings and evenings. Firefighting training from the University of Illinois was also held at the firehouse. In March, Samuel Opp and Ray Thomas Presswood were accepted as members. Over April 13–15, the Pinckneyville department's divers were called upon to help locate a body in Rend Lake. The day after this episode, four of our men attended a diving class.

The department also welcomed four new members in 1975: Paul (Buddy) Day, Jack McCrary, Kenny Hagene and Dwayne Campbell. Jackets were purchased by the Association. A phone sticker campaign was launched just before the end of the year.

A discussion regarding the feasibility of firemen taking over ambulance duties marked the start of 1976. Eighteen firemen agreed to serve the community by helping to make ambulance calls in the 1959 panel emergency truck; it cost the Association \$560 for insurance. A total of 20 rescue calls were

made during this tour of duty, which lasted from February until September.

The bylaws were amended in 1976 to read that, when a member quit the fire department, he quit the Association. Lifetime members were exempted from this rule. In June, a mutual aid compact was drawn up with the Coulterville Fire Department. September saw Tom Kelly, Tom Glodo, Dave Kelly and Jim Wengil welcomed as new members.

The 1941 city pumper made its last run to fight a fire on August 29. (Former fireman Paul (Digger) Vuichard now owns the pumper and plans to restore it.) The 1941 Chevy Pumper was present at many big fires through the years. These included:

March 30, 1944	Luther Hutchings Tavern
December 18, 1945	Gruner Hardware Store
March 8, 1980	Beaucoup Baptist Church
October 5, 1988	Pinckneyville Community Hospital
September 26, 1988	B.C. Christopher Company Mill
August 11, 1974	Windsor Hotel and Tavern

*The firemen of the old days were known as "smoke eaters."*

Ironically, on October 10, 1986, the 1941 pumper had to be rescued from a fire at the Forest City Garment Factory, where the Fireman's Association was keeping it in storage.

The year 1977 started off with the Consol Coal Company Number 2 Mine Tipple Fire. This blaze kept the fire department on the scene for four and a half hours. A total of 1,000 feet of hose was laid out. Assistant Chief Smith was taken for medical treatment to the Pinckneyville Hospital.

Reverend Tim Dorsch joined the department in May, and the fire department began making a new map of the fire district. The department also gave the Bozo water dunk stand to the ambulance service.

October was a busy month around the firehouse. Tower's had submitted





Engine 45 — Pinckneyville City's first diesel fire truck

the low bid — \$55,796 — for the class A pumper. This would become Engine 5, the first diesel engine city pumper. On October 4, firemen responded to a fire call at the grandstand of the fairgrounds. Firefighters were on the scene at this fire for three hours. The Association also bought a steam table to be used for the fish fry fundraiser.

The year closed out with another run to the fairgrounds; this time a horse barn was on fire. The blaze left the barn destroyed and four horses dead. Firemen were on the scene for four and a half hours and laid out 1,350 feet of hose.

The city donated \$50 to the Volunteer Fireman's Association's fireworks fund in 1978. On June 5, 1978, the 1941 Chevy pumper was replaced with the new diesel pumper and was officially retired by the city. The pumper was donated to the Association. On June 14, the diesel pumper arrived from Tower's Fire Apparatus of Freeburg, and Bud Lalicker became a member. He took Tom Kellogg's place on the roster.

On August 16, firemen responded to Bartle's pasture, located east of North Beaucoup Street, for a large barn fire. This fire required over 1,000 feet of hose to be laid out. The Bartle brothers' barn was totally destroyed in this blaze.

The year closed out with a discussion on where to house the ambulance, and with Paul (Digger) Vuichard becoming a member on September 13. Vuichard served a 10-month tour, later rejoining the department.

The year 1979 opened with the Volunteer Fireman's Ambulance Association being given permission by the city to use the firehouse as their station. The city also spent \$1,125 for Federal fire helmets in the first week of 1979. On February 14, John Phillips and Ruben Davis became members.

On February 25, Southern Illinois was hit with "The Great Ice Storm." This event resulted in many hours of special duty calls for Pinckneyville firemen, who performed many tasks for the community over the subsequent two days. They were asked to become not only firemen, but also a wrecker service, ambulance drivers, light crews, power crews, lumberjacks, meals-on-wheels deliverers, taxi cab drivers and medical supply personnel.

### *On February 25, Southern Illinois was hit with "The Great Ice Storm."*

On May 21, Jerry M. Smith took over as chief of the department, and Jack McCrary became his assistant. On July 5, the firemen honored former fire chief Harlan (Shine) Yeager for his service at the Coal Belt Firefighter's meeting with a plaque and a Seiko watch. He was also awarded honorary lifetime membership status. Yeager served as chief from 1968 to 1979. Two weeks later, Virgil Jausel also retired after 20 years of service.

July 14 marked another special-duty call, as Chief of Police Tom Denton requested that firemen respond to wash down the street after a horse had to be destroyed.

At the August Association meeting, it was decided that certain equipment purchased by the Association for its men, such as helmets and badges, would belong to the men after they completed 10 years of service with the department.

Dave Kelly became a lieutenant in October, and Fred Kelly and Tom Jeter became members of the fire department. The year ended with the city buying \$2,817.80 in equipment for the new pumper.

On January 14, 1980, firemen were called to 310 West St. Louis Street for the First Baptist Church fire. This fire, which was started by an electrical short in a space heater, resulted in \$4,000 in damage to the structure.

On March 15, the tones were set off for the Knights of Columbus Hall Fire at 310 North Gordon Street. This was an 11-hour call; the fire totally destroyed the \$145,000 structure. This spectacular blaze was started when an electrical ballast in a fluorescent light shorted out. This fire required a great length of hose — some 2,050 feet — to be laid

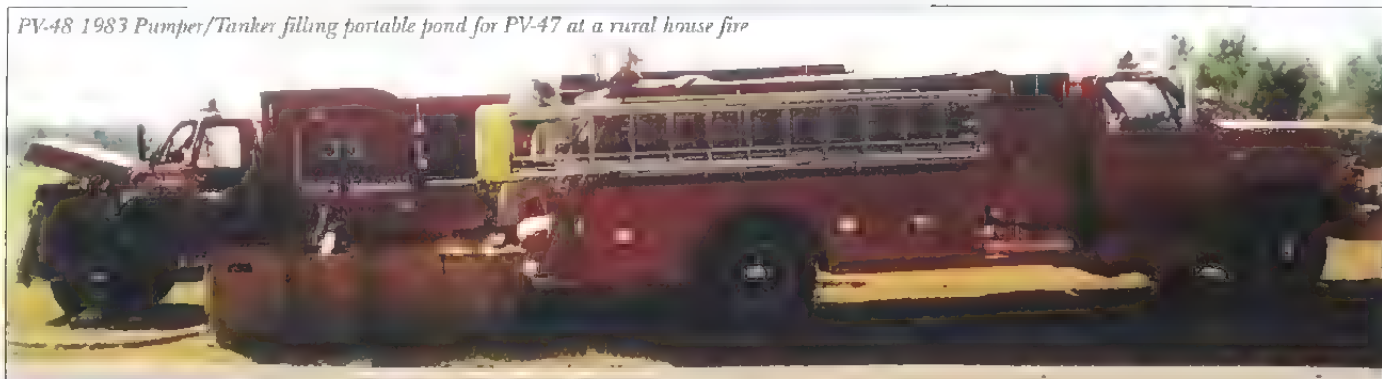
out to establish an adequate water supply.

After this fire, the firemen decided that a pay increase was in order and immediately began to lobby the city for it. On April 21, the firemen's pay was increased to \$4.50 per hour. In October, the Association purchased 30 Tempo Gloves. December 11 saw the new rural pumper, Engine 9, being delivered from Tower's Fire Apparatus of Freeburg, Ill. This unit replaced the 1955 rural pumper.

In February of 1981, the city began a smoke detector campaign, purchasing 60 smoke detectors to sell at cost — \$10 — to the public. Don Lazeonwas' resignation was accepted in



PV-48 1983 Pumper/Tanker filling portable pond for PV-47 at a rural house fire



June, and the new officers of the department were named. Dave Kelly and Tim Dorsch became captains, and Edward Trail and Ruben Davis became lieutenants.

In July, the city ran an advertisement to recruit new firemen. Answering this ad were two prospects under the required age of 21: Tom Bardle and Frank Bigham. They were accepted as members on August 1. One month later, Fire Chief Jerry M. Smith received a phone call from the principal of the high school. It seems Frank Bigham went on a noon fire call, which made him tardy for his afternoon classes.

In September, the city bought 40 new steamer-type fire hydrants. The year closed out with the city purchasing hose from Coal Belt Fire Equipment Company: 500 feet of 2.5-inch hose, at \$1.64 a foot, and 300 feet of 1.5-inch hose, at a \$1.17 a foot, were purchased.

The year 1982 proved to be a very busy year for our firemen. There were 90 fire calls that year: 37 city calls and 53 rural calls. Firemen started the year with a New Year's Day fire at the Consolidated Coal Company,

Burning Star Number 2 Mine. This fire started as a result of spontaneous com-

bustion in the coal stockpile, and left crews on the scene for eight hours. Mutual aid was requested from DuQuoin and Sesser.

The firehouse was again emptied on January 9 for a fire call at the George Rennison residence. This house fire kept firemen on the scene for seven hours and resulted in \$52,500 in damage. DuQuoin personnel were requested to man the empty Pinckneyville station house. During this fire, Gilbert Helvey suffered burns on his arms, and David Kelly suffered a cut on his hand. Both were treated at Pinckneyville Hospital.

On January 14, the tones went out for a fire at the Leslie Patterson residence. Because of a delayed alarm and water shortages, the fire made great headway before the firefighters could begin battling the blaze. These delays caused the residence to be destroyed.

After a busy January, things quieted down for a while. The city purchased seven sets of bunker gear for 2 percent money, at a cost of \$265 apiece. In March, Steve Millikin and Jeff Smith joined the department. The Association bought a flag, new jumpsuits, hats, and donated \$200 to help establish the Ladies Auxiliary. ♦

*This fire started as a result of spontaneous combustion in the coal stockpile, and left crews on the scene for eight hours.*



Beck's Home at Conant, May 29, 1982



# Blow Me Down

## The Conant Tornado

On May 29, the Conant Tornado hit the fire district. The department spent Memorial Day weekend on tornado watch. Each of the three days there was threatening weather, which led to three different scatter calls for the trucks. During the first call out, on May 29, the village of Conant was directly in the path of an F-3 tornado. At about 2:00 p.m., while trucks were scattered around Pinckneyville monitoring the skies, a funnel cloud was spotted just west of Conant.

Upon arrival, firemen were directed to the devastated Moore home, as residents feared the house had been occupied when the tornado struck. After a very extensive search of the debris, the residence was determined to be empty.

Three teens were injured in this twister. They had been fishing across the road from the Moore house before the storm cloud came up. They ran to the Moore house just before the storm hit, but could not get in because the door was locked. They then dove under a car in the carport. The home was completely destroyed, and the three boys, Steve Campbell, Donald Moore and Tony Karabec, were injured and taken to the hospital by automobile before units arrived on the scene.

Firefighters were on scene for nine hours. Most of this time was spent searching, securing the scene and putting tarps over personal property. During salvage operations in the Beck residence — which had been leveled, with only an interior wall left standing — the phone began to ring. You should have seen the looks on the men's faces. I had the special pleasure of answering this call. Standing amid all the devastation, with the exterior walls completely gone, I fully expected to hear God on the other end of the line. I had given no thought to the underground phone lines.

Fireman Tom Bardle was injured during this call when a nail pierced his fire

boot. This call took place at the same time as a tornado was tearing through Marion, Ill. The department was asked to respond to Marion with any apparatus they could spare but had to decline, since all our manpower was concentrated at the Conant scene.

In June, Gordon Deal resigned; he had been with the department 12 years. The Association also purchased a video recorder. On August 5, firemen responded to the Max McKinzie garage fire. This residence was located 10 miles north of the city on Route 127. Crews worked the scene for six hours, and the fire resulted in \$35,000 in damages to the garage and its contents.

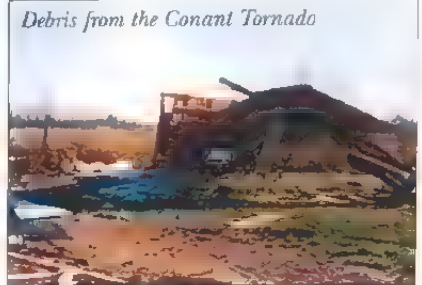
A new rural truck was ordered from Tower's Fire Apparatus to replace the aging 1957 pumper. Firemen's training through the University of Illinois took place in September and October. Oren Loos retired after 24 years with the department; Alan McClurken took his place on the roster.

On December 5, Charles Swetzler died at age 83. He was given a full fireman's funeral for his 49 years of service.

The city purchased a portable pump and eight Scott air packs out of 2 percent money. The year ended with the John Stroehlin residence fire, which began when the owner's son overturned a candle in his bedroom. The fire resulted in \$28,000 in damage to the dwelling.

The events of 1982 made it a busy year, but 1983 would prove to be a nightmare.

On January 7, firefighters were called to the Louise Loos residence at 206 East Chester Street. The firemen were summoned at approximately 6 a.m. and were met by a large volume of smoke pouring from the rear of the structure. The back door was forced open, and an aggressive interior attack ensued. Twenty-five minutes later, the body of 82-year-old Louise Loos was found in



Debris from the Conant Tornado

*I fully expected to hear God on the other end of the line*

## Membership of the Fire Department — 1983

Chief Jerry M. Smith  
Assistant Chief Jack McCrary  
Thomas Bardle  
Bill Barr  
James Beaty  
Frank Bigham  
Jeff Davis  
Ruben Davis  
Paul Day  
Tim Dorsch  
George Englehardt  
Gilbert Helvey  
Kirwin Hiesner  
Steve Hill  
Tom Jeter  
David Kelly  
Mark Lauzon  
Alan McClurken  
Steve Millikin  
Bill Schrader  
Jim Smith  
Edward Trail  
Harold Valentine

*A sudden storm broke open with full fury on the night of Tuesday, October 12, 1983.*

the kitchen; she had been overcome by smoke. Louise Loos was the first fire victim in the region in 1983. Six thousand dollars in damages to the structure and \$5,000 in damages to the contents were the result of this blaze. The call lasted six hours, and some 1,500 feet of hose were utilized. Fireman Jeff Davis was treated for blisters to his feet, and Engine 5's pump malfunctioned at this blaze.

On May 14, the Pinckneyville Rural Fire Department was called to mutually aid the Cutler Fire Department at the Captain Mine warehouse and office fire. The new pumper/tanker Engine 8, which had been delivered by Tower's Fire Apparatus earlier in the week, responded to this mutual aid call. This fire of unknown origin kept the new truck continuously pumping for nearly six hours.

Things quieted down during the warmer months. In June, we welcomed three new members: Jeff Smith, Kevin Lunneman and Bret Morton. The Association also purchased a television and a VCR for the training room. Firemanship IV classes started, and hydrants were flushed and tested in October. The city agreed to a mutual aid compact with the Coal Belt Fire Protection Association.

## **The Crash of Air Illinois Flight 710**

A sudden storm broke open with full fury on the night of Tuesday, October 12, 1983. On that night, a British-built Hawker-Siddeley 748 airliner crashed north of Pinckneyville at the John Fisher Farm. This flight, officially known as 710, made national headlines for three days. Three crewmembers and seven passengers were aboard this flight, which had taken off from Springfield, Ill. headed to Carbondale, Ill. Flight 710 disappeared from Kansas City radar at 9:05 p.m. The crash instantly killed all 10 persons aboard. Pinckneyville firemen were attending Firemanship IV classes when the call came in; a full response was out of the station in less than two minutes. Ironically, Air Illinois had made its final payment on this 10-year-old aircraft the very day of the crash.

Air Illinois had been in business since 1970 and had never had any accidents until this night. Air Illinois served six states and employed 225 people. The 11 planes in their fleet served some 25,000 passengers per month, but as a result of this crash, the company immediately filed for bankruptcy.



*Pinckneyville Fire Department responding to a fire at night.*







*Air Illinois Newspaper Clip Showing landing gear and debris in John Fisher's pond*

It was later determined that the cause of the accident was not the bad weather, as was first believed, but pilot error. This was revealed just days after the crash, when the F.A.A. reviewed the flight recorders. The pilot had continued the flight despite the fact that a problem had developed in a faulty generator shortly after takeoff.

Just 16 days later, our firemen were called to another big incident. This time it was not a rural call but a city fire. On October 28, the tones were set off shortly after noon for a small fire at the Contempr Homes Manufacturing Plant, located just north of the fairgrounds.

This building contained four units at the time of the blaze. Upon evacuation, the building was left with all its large factory doors wide open. This gave a flue effect to the fire building, which was constructed of exposed wood, turning a small fire into a raging inferno. Add to this the fact that there were no hydrants at the scene, and it's clear that this situation quickly became very bad.

This fire lasted 11 hours; mutual aid had been requested before the fire truck was at the railroad tracks. During this fire, Engine 9 laid 600 feet of 2.5-inch hose, Engine 8 laid 1,200 feet of 2.5-inch hose, Engine 4 laid 150 feet of 2.5-inch hose and 200 feet of 1.5-inch hose, and Engine 5 laid 700 feet of 2.5-inch hose and 500 feet of 1.5-inch hose. Water had to be pumped from the hydrant at the swimming pool to the north side of the fairgrounds. A total of 2,650 feet of 2.5-inch fire hose and 700 feet of 1.5-inch hose was laid out at this fire. This blaze was also documented on videotape.

*The pilot had continued the flight despite the fact that a problem had developed in a faulty generator*

## **Carbondale-Bound Air Illinois Flight 710 Crashes In Hilly Backwoods East of Pinckneyville, 10 Dead**

*The headline from the newspaper informing the public of the crash*



*Pizza Pit Fire December 18, 1982*

*The fire resulted in  
\$50,000 in damage  
to the structure*

Another fire on December 18 made headlines – the Pizza Pit fire, located at 502 South Main Street. (This site is where the Grecian Steakhouse is presently located.) The owners of the business were Darrell Schweitzer and associates.

The initial request for assistance called for just one fireman to respond at the Pizza Pit. David Kelly soon arrived on scene and, realizing that the deep fryer was ablaze, he then called out the rest of the department. So many firemen showed up at the scene that trucks and needed equipment were left in the firehouse. This delayed the arrival of the second truck, which was needed to establish an adequate water supply.

The fire resulted in \$50,000 in damage to the structure and left the business closed for months.

In 1983, the city received a total of 39 fire calls. Eight of these were false alarms from Perry Manor Nursing Home.

The fire chief's son, Jerry Robert Smith, joined the department in November.

With only 31 city calls, 1984 proved to be a quieter year than the previous two. The firemen accepted two new members: Brad Perry and Rich Garner. The child rescue sticker program was put into action. In February, the department held a defensive-driving class, and in March, firemen helped launch the "Jaws of Life" fundraiser. Bill Schrader's resignation was also accepted in March.

April began with the Pinckneyville Department hosting the Coal Belt Firefighters meeting. The firemen got a pay raise from the city that was later matched by the rural department. The firefighters started receiving \$5 an hour per call. David Kelly, the assistant

chief, also received a pay increase to \$2,074.92 annually.

September saw the University of Illinois hosting a live burn training at the Hale residence on Beaucoup and Water streets. The Association donated \$500 to the "Jaws of Life" fundraiser, and in October the city purchased \$1,372.20 worth of bunker coats and pants.

The big fire of 1984 was the Roy Swaller house fire at Indiana and Wisconsin streets. The alarm went out on Christmas night; the blaze kept firemen on the scene six hours. The balloon-type construction allowed the fire to race up the wall into the upper story, where the rear wall was removed in order to reach the blaze. There was \$25,000 in damages to the structure and \$12,250 in loss of contents.

During the third week of 1985, some of the coldest temperatures ever recorded gripped the southern part of the state. During this outbreak of freezing weather, our men were out of their quarters constantly. This was one of the busiest 48-hour periods our fire department ever faced.

### **The Robert Duckworth Residence Fire**

On January 20, 1985 — Super Bowl Sunday — the fire department was called to battle an extremely stubborn blaze at the Duckworth residence, located 6 miles east of the city on Route 154. This two-story residence with full basement was totally gutted by fire on what was one of the coldest days ever recorded in the region. A temperature of -8 degrees combined with a strong north wind to drive wind chills down to -43 degrees. This fire resulted in \$167,500 in damage to the dwelling.



Mutual aid was requested from the Tamaroa and DuQuoin fire departments. Tamaroa reported to the scene while DuQuoin manned the empty Pinckneyville station during this 12-hour fire call.

Upon the departments' arrival, the basement of the home was already well-involved, making entry impossible. Some 30,000 gallons of water were transported to the scene and were combined with water pumped from a pond near the residence. During the first attempted entry, Fireman Tom Bardle's left leg crashed through the floor only inches from the doorway; he was treated for a bad bruise at the Pinckneyville Emergency Room after the fire.

Exacerbating the situation was the fact that firemen were already at work at another structure fire north of the city when the Duckworth fire toned out. This blaze, at Pyatt's pump house, resulted when the owner attempted to thaw frozen pipes with a portable heater, which exploded, starting the blaze.

Cold weather also hampered operations at the Duckworth fire from the start. With a full rural assignment already working the fire north of town, the Pinckneyville city department could respond to this fire with only Engine 5 — and its pump had frozen on arrival. Some 800 feet of hose lines were laid in an attempt to get some kind of vantage point on this hard-to-reach fire. Firemen at the scene, their bunker gear, helmets and air packs frozen to their

bodies, resembled frozen human bells. After the fire, frozen hoses had to be folded — insofar as possible — and loaded on the beds of pickups to be taken back to the station for thawing.

While the station was busy getting the trucks back in service, another structure fire was toned out. Firemen quickly gathered up the hose and left to battle the third of six blazes that took place in this 48-hour period.

The very next day, the fire trucks from the city would be called at 2:13 p.m. to the Tom C. McDaniel house at 204 West Mulberry Street. The tenants, Donna Smith and her family, escaped the house uninjured before the first truck arrived. The fire resulted in \$34,900 in damage. A total of 600 feet of 2.5-inch hose and an unknown amount of 1.5-inch hose was laid out to battle this fire. Fireman Rick Garner was treated for a smashed thumb, and Assistant Chief David Kelly was treated for frostbite. A special ventilation technique was employed at this fire when Captain Tom Jeter vented the second story windows with bricks from the yard. During this episode a car fire was toned out, and the city trucks were mutually aided by Truck 10 (the brush truck) to fight this blaze. ♠

*Firemen at the scene, their bunker gear, helmets and air packs frozen to their bodies, resembled frozen human bells.*

*Robert Duckworth house fire*



# "Go Home And Let It Burn Down!"

Once again, on January 29, city firefighters responded to a large structure fire. This fire was at the Mark Malinski home at 801 West Randolph Street. An estimated \$45,000 in damage was the result of this blaze.

*Mayor Bill Cunningham was forcibly removed from the scene and nearly arrested by state police officers*

As if the firemen hadn't had enough work over the preceding few weeks, on February 13, 17 of our firemen volunteered to run with the ambulance squad as a mutual aid rescue company. These men were to perform extrication when needed and make sure equipment was properly maintained after each call. By March,

Truck 6, the emergency unit, housed the "Jaws of Life" and its accessories.

On March 2, firemen responded to a call from the Rusty Nail Tavern, located at 313 West Parker Street. The fire resulted in \$23,400 in damage to the two-story wooden structure. The building, which was uninsured, sustained an undetermined amount of damage in the five-hour fire. During the fire — which looked suspicious in nature — a large crowd gathered at the scene and constantly heckled crews with cries of "Go home and let it burn down!"

Other, happier events also occurred in March. Donald Davis joined the department, and the city purchased 500 feet of 1.5-inch hose, 900 feet of 2.5-inch fire hose, a federal siren and a select-flow fire nozzle. The Association purchased nomex hoods for its members.

April brought the Perry County Country Club shed fire. The fire was in a maintenance shed that housed 22 golf carts and grounds equipment and resulted in \$110,200 in loss. This fire was

of undetermined origin. During the height of the blaze, the golf carts' batteries shorted over, allowing the carts to motor out of the fire building, totally involved in flames; the carts had to be stopped and hosed off before they could roll away. Of large concern at the scene was the possible environmental impact from the green stream of water running out of the burning building. It was determined that this came from fertilizers, and it was decided to contain the run off before it could enter a nearby creek and cause an environmental impact.

Jim Gielow and David Mucha joined the department in May, and the city approached the Association about manning the beer tent at the upcoming Pinckneyville picnic. Pinckneyville's city and rural departments also lent mutual aid to the Percy Fire Department at the Captain Mines. During this four-hour call, fireman Steve Millikin suffered from heat exhaustion and was taken to Pinckneyville Community Hospital. Engine 4 and Engine 8 supplied water to help douse the Paige-Wheel excavator.

On the first day of June, at the height of the Pinckneyville Picnic, the firemen were called to help assist state police in the apprehension of an armed, mentally unstable suspect on the roof of Rhodes Burford Furniture Store. The incident began when the suspect, armed with an axe climbed to the store roof and told the crowd below he was going to kill himself.

The city patrolmen called for a state police negotiator. While en route, this officer was involved in a car accident that disabled his squad car. He sent for a replacement car and drove it to the rear of the building. The negotiator then told the suspect that the car was his — if he came off the roof. The man's reply





*Rusty Nail Tavern Fire*



was immediate — the axe was thrown down, breaking out the windshield of the car.

Later during the incident, Mayor Bill Cunningham was forcibly removed from the scene and nearly arrested by state police officers for interfering in a police matter. The Mayor told the suspect that nobody could hold his town captive and proceeded to outline an "X" on the ground. He then yelled up, "See if you can hit this!"

Firemen were called to raise the 50-foot "banger" ladder with only four men, to allow the suspect to climb down to the street. While the suspect's attention was focused forward, police were able to use stun guns to immobilize him. He was then tied into the Stokes basket and lowered to the ground. Several firemen received letters of commendation from the police department for their bravery at this incident.

Profits from the beer sale at the picnic earned the Association \$467. This money was used to buy rams and extra hoses for the Amkus extrication tool. The city also responded to two more mutual-aid calls later in the year. Of the 102 calls in 1985, 53 were in the city, and seven were false alarms from Perry Manor Nursing Home.

On July 25, Pinckneyville firemen gave mutual aid to the Cutler Fire Department at Captain Mine, supplying them with S.C.B.A.'s on a three-hour call.

The day after Christmas, we were again requested to lend mutual aid to Sparta for a fire at the Sparta Medical building. This fire call lasted four hours and caused an estimated \$500,000 loss; the fire was blamed on fluorescent light ballast.

The year 1986 was another busy one for the department. There were 102 combined calls resulting in \$411,485 in total fire loss for the year (the 37 city calls resulted in \$151,350 in fire loss, and the 65 rural calls accounted for \$260,135 in fire loss).

The year began with the fire station becoming a registered office and Chief Jerry Smith being named as the registered agent for the Association. The department also received two new members, James W. Beatty and Mitchell L. Felmeier. The city purchased 30 gallons of firefighting foam and eight bunker coats for \$168 each.

On April 9, Sparky the Dalmatian, the department's mascot, died. A raffle for the last night of the fair was set; it brought in \$200 in profit for the Association. On June 11, the 1941 pumper was moved to the garment factory for storage. Later that month, new standard operating procedures were adopted by the Association, and the firemen collected the money for camping at the fairgrounds during the car craft event. Firemen also received a pay raise to \$5.40 per hour in June.

On July 15, firemen were called to Luke's Café, located on the square at 2 East Water Street. Lightning had struck the building, starting a blaze that took five hours to extinguish. The result was \$16,400 in damage to the upper floor of the building. Extremely warm weather hampered operations at the scene, and Assistant Chief David Kelly sustained steam burns on his wrists during the fire. ♠

# Garment Factory Loses To Fire

## The Forest City Garment Factory Fire

On October 10, 1986, Pinckneyville firemen would be called to a spectacular blaze at the old Forest City Garment Factory. This 40,000-square-foot structure built in 1929 would light up the night sky as far away as Sunfield. Samuel

J. Fulk owned this building, located at 702 South First Street. Firemen responded to the scene at 1:15 a.m., and the fire was already venting through the roof. Crews immediately went to work laying lines to protect exposures and rescuing the 1941 pumper. Later, arriving

crews actually climbed the roofs of houses south of the burning building to remove burning shingles.

This was an uninsured structure, which was set ablaze by three juveniles. Mutual aid was requested from the DuQuoin and Tamaroa fire departments. Flaming embers were carried as far away as Walnut Street. DuQuoin was asked to take care of any spot fires that might occur, and Tamaroa was on hand at the scene.

This fire left crews working this one-acre blaze for nearly 14 hours and resulted in \$100,000 in fire loss. The nearby Pentecostal church was saved by an aggressive water current but still received some \$6,000 in damage. Tom Bardle received radiant burns to his right shoulder during this operation. He was later treated at Pinckneyville Hospital Emergency Room and released.

A total of 3,700 feet of 2.5-inch supply lines were laid out to supply trucks and a deluge gun. Another 1,100 feet of 1.5-inch hose was laid out for seven different handlines. At a flow of more than 1,000 gallons a minute, this fire didn't seem to diminish at all for nearly two hours into the fight.

The garment factory opened for business in September 1929 with a total floor space of 38,400 feet in a 160-by-240-foot building. It was expanded in January 1939 to full capacity by the Kearn's brothers and employed 400 people. It remained in business until 1978 when the Manning Company filed bankruptcy. Sam Fulk later bought it. Ironically, this blaze occurred during fire prevention week.

The new year, 1987, brought four new members: Mike Millikin, John

*The fire left crews  
working this one-acre  
blaze for nearly 14 hours*

October 10, 1986 - The Forest City Garment Factory aftermath



Nelrkorn, Chris Slechticky and Ron Ellet. There were 47 city calls this year; however, the first call of any significance would be a rural fire.

On January 24, it is believed that a heat lamp at the Wayne Wildermuth residence started a large barn fire that sent crews racing just past the Conant curves. The first engine to arrive was immediately faced with a large rescue problem: the barn housed 147 pigs, horses and a calf. Fireman David Mucha was credited with the rescue of a horse, while firemen Steve Millikin and Chief Smith were able to rescue a small group of baby pigs. This call lasted six hours; 128 pigs and a calf burned to death.

In March, city crews were called to the former Henry Porter residence, now owned by the Perry County Fair Association. Firemen were faced with a stubborn blaze in a five-room house valued at \$10,500.00. The fire was the result of arson and kept crews on the scene for five hours. Four roofs had to be chopped through by hand, which extremely hampered the venting of this structure.

The next blaze to test our firemen was on April 13. This fire was at St. Paul's United Church of Christ, located at 205 East Jackson Street. This fire toned out at 4:17 p.m. and resulted in \$65,000 in damage to the church. Some 34 separate fires burned in the church and the Christian study building. A priceless 100-year-old Bible was destroyed in this blaze. Sadly, the fire was arson, set by two young children playing with matches. They started their rampage in the Christian study building by lighting up the curtains and stage area. They then proceeded to burn flags, Bibles and songbooks in the church area. Even though the blazes were scattered through both buildings, the church never missed a service.

The next blaze to challenge the rural department was Bob Templeton's barn fire. The structure, located just south of Sunset Terrace on the old Crawford place, required some 40,000 gallons of water to be hauled over a two-day period. George Englehardt celebrated his 62nd birthday while fighting this blaze. The hay bales were scattered over the Templeton farm acreage, which allowed



them to burn themselves out, putting a final end to the incident.

In September, the Brad Owen house fire at 314 St. Louis Street kept crews on the scene for six hours. This fire resulted in \$23,000 in damage to a two-story wooden structure.

In October, the city authorized a mutual-aid agreement with the ambulance squad. This resulted in the fire department automatically being sent to any car accidents, with the men only being paid if an extrication was required. Later in the year, plans were drawn for a new city hall and fire station.

On December 4, firemen were called to 910 South Sunset Terrace for the Richard Hagene fire. This fire started in some cleaning rags in the garage and exploded the oxy/acetylene tanks, which quickly spread the blaze. The roof completely burned, resulting in \$91,400 in damage. The Brad Perry home to the west also received considerable damage. Firemen worked the scene for six hours. Jeff Smith was treated at the hospital for burns to his right arm.

Things were much quieter in 1988. City calls dropped off, with a total of 10 fewer calls for the year. One thing that was the same, however, was the fact that the big fire of the year was again an arson blaze.

In May, our firemen received a raise in pay for their efforts: firemen's pay was increased to \$6 per hour, while the chief

*Mutual aid was requested from the DuQuoin and Tamaroa fire departments*





received \$12,000 annually from both departments. David Kelly also had his pay increased to \$2,500 annually.

The big blaze of 1988 hit the city on November 11. This was the Ben Daniel store fire, located at the corner of West Kaskaskia and South Douglas streets. This former grocery store was a commercial building built of masonry and wood. Early on in this fire, a major back-draft explosion erupted from the front of the building. The hose crews advanced their line to the front of the burning building; before ventilation could be attempted, a violent back draft knocked all six firemen to the ground.

This fire was determined to be arson and resulted in \$60,000 in fire loss. Mutual aid was requested from the DuQuoin Fire Department to man the empty firehouse. Three thousand feet of 2.5-inch hose and 600 feet of 1.5-inch hose were utilized during this eight-hour blaze. A master stream stinger was also employed in an attempt to douse the blaze.

Crews were called back five hours later to put out hot spots.

The next day, an alarm sent firefighters to the Perry County IGA at 412 South Main Street for a fire in a storage shed that housed refrigerator units. Five hundred dollars in damage resulted from this blaze. The same person who had started the Ben Daniel Store blaze was also tied to this fire; police were able

to apprehend the suspect without incident and obtained his confession.

January of 1989 passed without incident, but on February 21, Pinckneyville firefighters narrowly escaped from a very deadly situation.

The Eldorado Chemical trucks routinely pass through Pinckneyville, supplying their explosives to area coal mines and rock quarries. They can be easily identified by their 1962 Military 2.5-ton chassis, which looks like no other vehicle on the road.

Pinckneyville police reported one of these trucks trailing a smoke cloud from its rear wheels. The patrolman tried desperately to attract the driver's attention. The vehicle finally came to a stop directly in front of the high school on East Water Street; however, the fire was toned out as if it were on West Water Street. This even further delayed the trucks' arrival on the scene. A wheel fire was quickly discovered and extinguished without incident; it wasn't until the fire was out that the driver notified firefighting crews that he was fully loaded with Anfo Plus mine explosives. (Note: Two years after this incident, six Kansas City firemen were killed in an accident very similar to this.)

Fire calls for the year dropped to 26 in the city – a reduction of 11 calls from the year before. We would like to think this was due to several years of fire prevention efforts. This campaign was renewed in 1982, when Gilbert Helvey was a fire-prevention officer for the Association. We reach hundreds of kids every year, and I am glad to see it continuing into the new millennium.

March saw the city finalizing plans for the city hall and fire station. These plans were changed several times before the city committed to the buildings as they stand today.

In May, the University of Illinois sponsored a much needed structural firefighting class. The live-burn training was conducted at the old Ronnie Tanner House on South Walnut Street, which is now the location of Designs Unlimited.

### *Six firemen killed in explosion accident*

In July, Fire Chief Jerry M. Smith received a \$500 annual increase in salary. Assistant Chief David Kelly received a \$100 annual increase.

Probably the most hard-fought blaze of the year hit the rural department this month. It was the John Dudeck barn fire, located 3.5 miles west of the city. This fire toned out shortly after noon on a 97-degree day and resulted in a nine-hour firefight. Mutual aid was requested from the DuQuoin, Tamaroa and Cutler fire departments. Six of Pinckneyville's bravest were transported by ambulance to the hospital from this blaze. Firemen Jim Gielow, Terry Schimpf, Mark Sroka and Frank Bigham were treated and released. Chief Smith suffered from heat exhaustion and remained in the hospital overnight, while fireman George Engelhardt was released two days later. All these firemen suffered from heat-related emergencies. (The department had trained for oil-pit fires and had a controlled burn that turned into another hot blaze during the two days prior to this incident.)

August 12 brought firemen to a rather bizarre special-duty call at the edge of the fairgrounds. A horse had escaped and cut its leg in the fence that surrounds the horse barns. A veterinarian treated the horse for four hours at the scene. Firemen were asked to wash down the street to remove the blood.

In November, the city authorized the sale of the 1959 panel emergency truck. This truck was replaced by the former PV-18, a 1977 Modular ambulance purchased for \$4,999 from the Pinckneyville Ambulance Service. It was painted red, lettered, and featured a panther mural, all for a cost of \$600.

The last big blaze of the year hit the rural department on December 16. This was the Ron Ridgeway residence fire, located 7 miles south of the city. The residence was fully involved upon arrival, and the fire resulted in a fire loss of \$76,200. This call lasted six hours in severely cold weather and forced the department to bring in a water shuttle from the city. During this -4-degree night, the fire pumps on Engines 9 and 4 froze up. An extension ladder from Engine 8 was lost during the water shuttle. Four hydrants in the town were

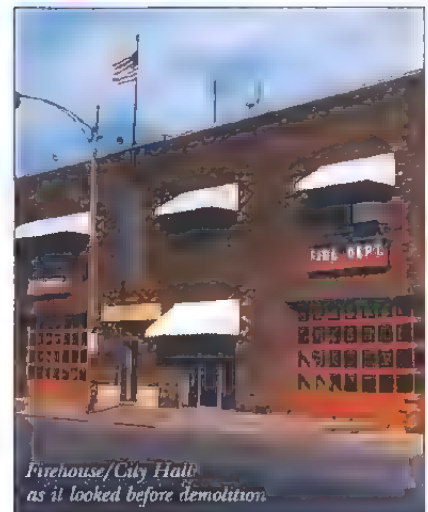
tapped before crews could find one that wasn't frozen. The tanker from Vergennes was requested to come to the scene, but was unable to offload because all the water in its tank had frozen during the commute. Fireman Chris Slechticky was taken to the hospital for burns that he suffered on his hands.

Plans for demolition of the firehouse took center stage in January 1990. This big contract of \$29,014 for both buildings was awarded to Kellerman Construction. Lights were installed on the new emergency truck in March.

The month of April brought some sadness but also high expectations, as the firemen cleared out of the fire station and awaited its demise. The firemen worked out of a temporary station at Provert's Construction on Mill and West Parker streets. (This is the only time in the town's history that the fire station was not located on Walnut Street since the erection of the first firehouse on May 7, 1894.) On April 26, wrecking crews took down the fire building.

In May, state funds were used to equip the emergency truck with a \$1,435 radio system. The fire chief also got an \$811 handheld pack.

On August 7, the big fire of the 27 city calls struck the Mobile Structure's framing house. This shed was located just north of the fairgrounds. The blaze resulted in a \$48,000 fire loss. This four-hour fire was documented on videotape.

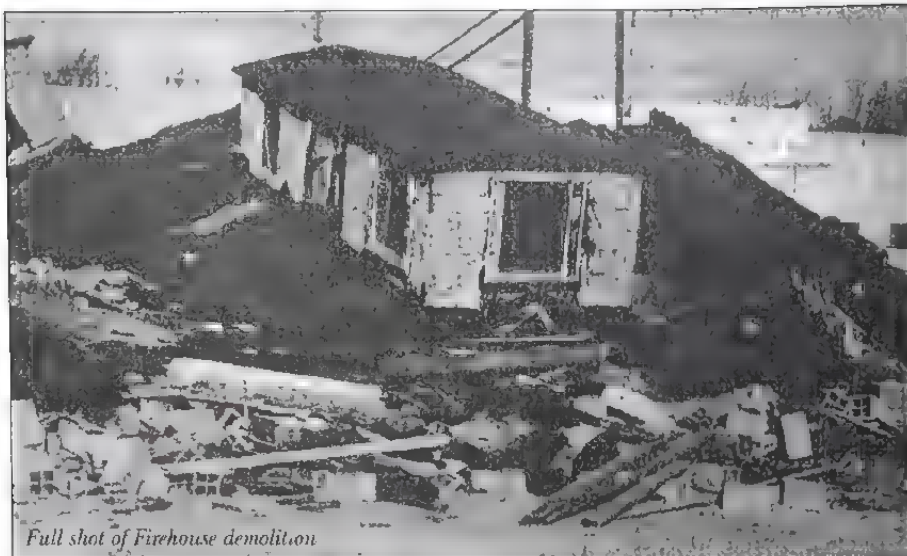


Firehouse/City Hall as it looked before demolition.

*The month of April brought some sadness but also high expectations, as the firemen cleared out of the fire station and awaited its demise.*



The firehouse is brought down with an end loader. A wall painting made by Buffy Davis is visible on the second-story wall.



Full shot of Firehouse demolition

The city adopted a new Disaster Preparedness Plan in November in the wake of Ivan Browning's predictions that an earthquake registering eight or more on the Richter scale was due to occur on the New Madrid fault line.

On February 1, the new fire station was completed. It featured many changes; several new things found their way into the building. Seventeen hundred dollars in appliances complemented the kitchen. The largest of these items was a refrigerator, and there was also a stove and a microwave oven. Because of the loss of the hose tower, a new hose dryer and a washer, including a turntable and a mobile storage loader, were purchased at a cost of \$15,591.40.

Anyone who served any time in the old hose tower appreciates the new dryer. I distinctly remember walking around on the 2-inch by 12-inch boards that spanned the top of the tower, wondering what it would feel like to fall 30 feet to the concrete floor below me. A little-known bit of trivia about the tower was the custom of writing your name and the date on the fish-oil-stained windows of the tower. Some inscriptions dating back to 1961 were still visible when the tower was taken down.

The city decided that, having a new station, they needed a new fire truck to put in it. A bid was received from Tower's Fire Apparatus for \$148,579. The new Truck 1203 was ordered on September 16, 1991.

Several fires made news in 1991, including the single-largest fire ever to hit the rural department. On February 7, the Pinckneyville Community High School was the scene of an arson blaze. Two separate fires were started in the third-floor stage area; these fires kept firemen on the scene for five hours. Heavy smoke hampered visibility at the scene, which led to Edward Trail falling from the stage while operating the attack line. He was taken to Pinckneyville Hospital and released. Chuck McElvain also suffered from smoke inhalation.

On August 22, the DuQuoin Fire Department requested assistance from Pinckneyville for a fire at the DuQuoin Packing Plant. It took seven hours to extinguish this fire. Pinckneyville crews were asked to monitor the burning embers and keep them from starting grass fires. ♠

#### Membership of the Fire Department — 1991

Tom Bardle  
Jim H. Beaty  
Jim W. Beaty  
Frank Bigham  
Don Davis  
Jeff Davis  
Ruben Davis  
Eric Dunn  
George Englehardt  
James Gielow  
Steve Hill  
David Kelly  
Kevin Kelly  
Roy Lipe  
Alan McClurken  
Chuck McElvain  
Mike Milhkan  
Steve Millikin  
Bret Morton  
David Mucha  
John Nehrkorn  
Terry Schimpf  
Gary Schorfheide  
Chris Slechticky  
Jerry Smith  
Jerry L. Smith  
Mark Siroka  
Ed Trail  
Doug Valentine



# The Captain Goes Up In Flames

ARCH OF ILLINOIS 6360 SHOVEL FIRE: ON SEPTEMBER 9, 1991, THE PINCKNEYVILLE RURAL DEPARTMENT FACED THE SINGLE-LARGEST BLAZE TO DATE AT THE ARCH OF ILLINOIS COAL MINE. THE FIRE TONED OUT AT 9:44 P.M. FOR A LARGE, EARTH-MOVING MACHINE NEAR CONANT. UPON THE FIRST UNIT'S ARRIVAL, THE FIRE WAS BURNING 40 TO 50 FEET ABOVE GROUND ON THE 6360-TUB AREA. CHIEF BENNETT, FROM THE CUTLER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT, IMMEDIATELY CALLED FOR MUTUAL AID FROM PERCY, STEELEVILLE, CAMPBELL HILL, COULTERVILLE, DUQUOIN AND SPARTA.

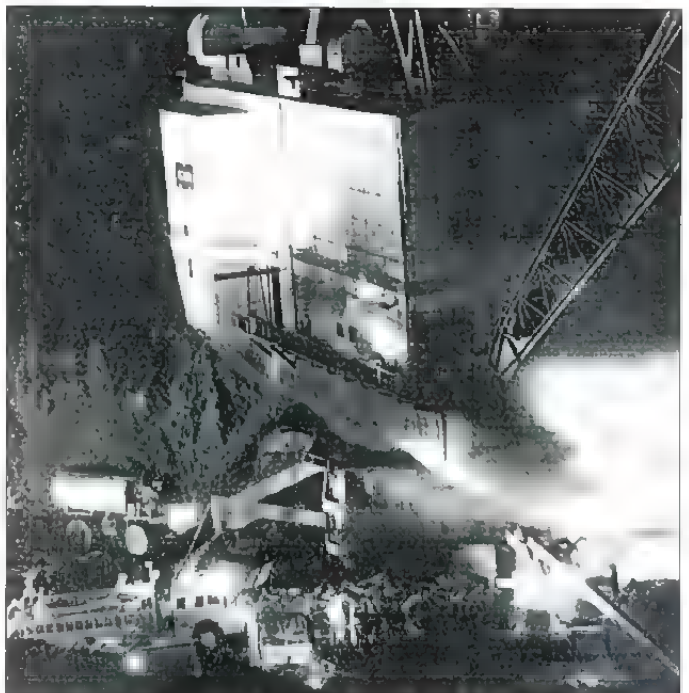
**T**he Marion 6360 coal-stripping shovel is the largest shovel in the world. It is constructed entirely of steel and stands 30 stories (215 feet to the top of the boom) tall. The weight of the machine exceeds 14,000 tons, it operates on 33,000 horsepower electric engines, and it is operated by a four-man crew. It was completed in 1967 and was operating in the Galum Creek Pit southeast of the village of Conant.

Upon Chief Smith's arrival, it was determined that the fire was in Pinckneyville's fire district. Attention immediately turned to developing a rescue operation, when it became known that one of the shovel's crewmembers was trapped above the fire, on the top of the tub's gantry area. Gary Andrews was instructed to get a safety belt and secure it to the boom cable. He then walked across the cables out to the boom, where a mine cherry picker was able to bring him safely to the ground.

The fire was burning out of control, fed by 1,000 gallons of diesel fuel, 8,000 gallons of hydraulic fluid, 1,000 pounds of grease and 1,000 gallons of solvent, as well as grease accumulated over years of service. The Cutler department set up and fed a deluge gun with two 2.5-inch hose lines. The Percy department laid out two 2.5-inch hand lines; one of these was mounted to a mine cherry picker. A 3,000-gallon portable tank was set up to give the trucks a water source. DuQuoin's pumper was sent to the highwall, where Coulterville's portable pond supplied it with water. Coulterville's and Pinckneyville's tankers kept the pond full for the DuQuoin truck. The Campbell Hill



*Marion 6360 Shovel (The Captain) shown here with its '70s paint colors*



*September 9, 1991 — Marion 6360 shovel fire resulted in a forty-million-dollar fire loss*

Fire Department set up their portable pond north of the 6360; it was filled by the mine's 10,000-gallon water trucks. When Sparta's ladder truck arrived, it provided an elevated water stream.

During the firefight, the Cutler and Percy trucks both experienced mechanical problems. The Pinckneyville pumpers took over their duties. The fire was under control by 3:30 a.m. and was declared out at 6:00 a.m.

Six firemen at this blaze suffered smoke inhalation and heat exhaustion. Jim Jennings, Sparta; Joe Black, Cutler; Mike Russel, Cutler; Gary Rednour, Percy; and Assistant Chief David Kelly, Pinckneyville. Med-Star Ambulance and Pinckneyville Ambulance Service transported these men to area hospitals.

The total equipment on hand for this \$40 million fire were eight pumpers, three tankers, one aerial ladder, two rescue trucks, three brush trucks, one light truck, two chief cars and a deluge gun. There were 97 firemen at the scene. Those from Pinckneyville included Tom Bardle, Frank Bigham, Jeff Davis, John Nehrkorn, Ruben Davis, George Englehardt, David Kelly, Steve Millikin, Chuck McElvain, Chris Slechticky, Eric Dunn, Roy Lipe, Doug Valentine, Donald Davis, Jim Gielow, David Kelly, David Mucha, Gary Schorfheide, Jim W. Beaty and Terry Schimpf. After the fire was out, John Nehrkorn was taken by car to the Pinckneyville Community Hospital for a knee injury.

This fire lasted 13 hours from its beginning until trucks returned to service. It was thought at first that the shovel could be returned to service; however, days later it was decided that the 180-yard shovel was a total loss, since the turn gear was destroyed by the excessive heat. It was cut up for scrap by Karco of Carbondale.

In September, the fire department was called upon to supplement the city's water supply over a three-day period in which pump work was done at the filter plant. This task was performed by Engine 4 and a skeleton crew of firemen.

In 1991, the fire calls for the year would total 66. Of these, 28 were in the city and 38 were rural. The two most notable calls were in fact mutual-aid calls.

In March, the firemen began making preparations for the annual fish fry, which was getting bigger every year. Since the firemen had a new station, they were not about to allow a greasy, fish-cooking stove to stain and smell up their new home. Being very resourceful, firemen built a portable fish-fry trailer that could be moved in every Good Friday to do the cooking.

April 16 saw one of the largest mutual-aid calls that year. This call sent our fire trucks to Tilden for a fire in a large bulk oil storage container, which had exploded and caught fire due to a lighting strike. The storage tank, located at the Tilden intersection of Routes 4 and 13, contained 9,000 gallons of product at the time of the incident. Shortly after the Tilden Fire Department arrived on the scene, a second tank exploded, injuring three of their men and threatening a natural gas pipeline. Mutual aid was called from a wide area; at the height of the firefight, some 50 men and 14 apparatus were on scene. The fire took three hours to control, with some 26,500 gallons of water and 255 gallons of foam being utilized.

On June 15, the new pumper took up residence in the Pinckneyville station. This Ford Taurus Fire Apparatus truck carries a 1,000-gallon-a-minute pump and a 1,000-gallon booster tank. Thirteen hundred feet of 5-inch supply line is carried on the back of this mighty diesel. The cab seats five, with four M.S.A. air packs mounted in jump seats. The total cost of the unit was \$150,000. A new radio system was also purchased for \$1,267.35 by the city to go with the truck. Fire Chief Jerry Smith also donated a ladder-lowering device for the truck in his dad's memory.

June also marked the completion of the State Certified Firefighter Two class. After 264 hours of college training, 17 Pinckneyville firemen became certified. They each received a \$100 bonus from the city for their dedication. The firemen who successfully completed all three Illinois State Fire Marshall's tests were: Chief Jerry M. Smith, Assistant Chief David Kelly, Captain Ed Trail, Lieutenant Jim Gielow and Firemen Tom Bardle, James Beaty, Eric Dunn, Kevin Kelly, Roy Lipe, Alan McClurken, Chuck McElvain, Brett Morton, David Mucha, John Nehrkorn, Terry Schimpf, Gary Schorfheide and Mark Sroka.

In September, the firemen held a boot block for the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) and the Jerry Lewis Telethon. (The joke of this was that Jerry's kids were collecting for Jerry's Kids.) The firemen raised more money for this event than the Carbondale fire department did during its boot block for MDA. My special commendations go out to those who participated in this worthwhile endeavor.

On October 15, Pinckneyville was again called out for mutual aid, this time to the DuQuoin High Rise for a fire that, sadly, resulted in one fatality. Our firemen used exhaust fans from the new pumper to clear out the smoky structure. It was during this fire that Chief Smith struck a telephone pole with the new truck. The chief had said jokingly that the first man to scratch the new truck would find himself off the department. He was allowed to stay on the department but had to put up with a lot of bad jokes about the episode.

December saw 37-year veteran of the department George Engelhardt rewarded with six plaques from various organizations. George was never at a loss for words until this night, when he was absolutely speechless. During the ceremony, our firemen would make a hasty retreat as the siren sounded for an extrication call on Route 152.

The year 1993 started with the city selling the chief's 1981 Ford Ltd. squad car. This car was affectionately known as "Alvin" to the men, because for the last two years the motor had chirped like a chipmunk. The chief was so fond of this car, he bought it for \$75.

The city made some noticeable changes this year. A new water tower project was started in Diamond Town to boost the low water pressure in that area. This \$406,300 project was contracted to Coldwell Tank, Inc.; M.I. was contracted for the construction at a cost of \$123,744. The Charlotte Hills subdivision was annexed into city limits later that year. The city also purchased 750 feet of new 1.75-inch fire hose for a total of \$1,237.50.

# Firemen Struggle To Save Local Lumber Yard

THE HOME LUMBER FIRE: A SPECTACULAR DOWNTOWN BLAZE HIT PINCKNEYVILLE WHEN THE OLD HOME LUMBER BUILDING CAUGHT FIRE ON JULY 1. A NEIGHBOR IN THE AREA SAW SMOKE COMING FROM BEHIND THE FENCE. FIRE CHIEF JERRY SMITH WAS CALLED TO INVESTIGATE, AND UPON HIS ARRIVAL AT 12:13 P.M., HE IMMEDIATELY HAD THE DEPARTMENT CALLED OUT.

MUTUAL AID WAS REQUESTED FROM THE TAMAROA, NASHVILLE AND DUQUOIN FIRE DEPARTMENTS. AT THE HEIGHT OF THE BLAZE, THE FLAMES AND SMOKE COULD BE SEEN AS FAR AWAY AS NASHVILLE. FIREMEN QUICKLY REALIZED THAT THE BUILDING COULD NOT BE SAVED AND CONCENTRATED ON SAVING THE SURROUNDING EXPOSURES. WESTERN AUTO, HAWK'S AUTOMOTIVE, POE'S PLUMBING, THE EAGLE'S LODGE AND A NEARBY HOME WERE SAVED BY THIS STRATEGY.



July 1, 1993 — Home Lumber venting through the roof

The firemen were extremely short-handed early on in the battle. Bystanders quickly stepped in and did a valiant job. I asked one of the men who helped in the fight about it, and I'll never forget his reply: "Hey, it was a lot of fun playing fireman for a day; but you guys are nuts if you do this all the time — it's a lot of hard work." Two exposures that could not be saved were a van owned by Brenda Summers and a car owned by Mike Harris. G.T.E. phone lines were also lost to the fire, as they ran the length of the building down Perry Street, right next to the blaze.

The fire loss to the DuQuoin State Bank was \$64,000 for this suspicious blaze. The building had been unoccupied nearly two years, but the property had come to be of interest to the Casey's Convenience Store chain only weeks before.

Firemen also elected a new chain of command in November. Jim Gielow and Tom Baudle became captains, and David Mucha and John Nehrkorn became lieutenants. In the same month, a heavy downpour drove Beaucoup Creek out of its banks and showed signs of destroying the city's filter plant. Firemen quickly responded and began an all-night sandbagging operation to establish a temporary dam.

In 1994, the I.S.O. lowered the city's rating to a 6; this became effective on June 1. The I.S.O. determines how much tax per property value a property owner pays for fire protection. The lower number gave taxpayers a long-awaited tax break.

The year showed an increase in the amount of calls: 77, compared to 48 calls a year earlier. Of the 77, 34 were city calls and 43 were rural calls.

The year ended with the city and rural departments and the Association



splitting the \$850 cost of a washing machine. This washing machine was used to clean the firemen's turnout gear.

In February 1995, firemen painted the Noward building across from the firehouse, as part of an agreement that required the city to purchase 30 new helmets out of the 2 percent tax money. The 30 new helmets were purchased for a total of \$2,670.00.

In the spring, our attention turned to taking the I.S.O. 6 rating even lower by obtaining a full-size emergency truck. Many avenues were tried, but it would not be until September of the following year that the firemen achieved their goal.

May delivered two separate downpours, forcing Beaucoup Creek to overrun its banks once again. This time, firemen were called on twice to protect the filter plant with a sandbagging operation.

In November, the city bought five sets of bunker gear at a cost of \$2,255. The city also decided to have its own radio-dispatching center, which would be separate from the present Perry County center. An election of officers was held; Jim Gielow and Tom Bardle remained the department's captains, while David Mucha and Ed Trail became the lieutenants. In December, the city again expanded, annexing Route 154 east to the UNI plant.

In January 1996, while the city was expanding its boundary, the 144-acre prison site and an additional 403,362 acres were taken in. The city had the responsibility for supplying water to the new area. This was accomplished with a new water tower east of town, which went to bids in December.

A buffer and air compressor were purchased for the station. An emergency truck unit also made it to the

building in September. This truck was designated to run on all calls except grass fires in the city limits, in compliance with I.S.O. standards. The truck was a 1974 Ford truck with a 1988 aluminum walk through body. It had 11,000 miles on it. The Association paid \$5,000 up front, to be followed by payments of \$1,000 a year for eight years. A total of \$35,000 would be borrowed toward the purchase, with the remaining \$5,000 coming out of 2 percent money.

#### Membership of the Fire Department — 1997

F. Thomas Bardle  
James W. Beaty  
Frank A. Bigham  
Mitch Feltmeyer  
Marc A. Folden  
James D. Gielow  
Kyle E. Keene  
David W. Kelly  
Kevin Kelly  
Roy A. Lipc  
Charles M. Martin  
Alan McClurken Jr.  
Clay McDonnough  
Charles McElvain  
David G. Mucha  
John J. Mucha  
John Nehrkorn  
Troy A. Pabst  
Michael Pierson  
Randall L. Rieman  
Gary Schortheide  
Danny Sizemore  
Jerry M. Smith  
Edward Trail  
Paul J. Vuichard

*The year 1997 was  
a relatively quiet  
one; there were just  
57 calls that year,  
almost equally split  
between city and  
rural calls.*

This truck was purchased from Marango, IL. The Modern Woods-men of America came to the aid of the Association, sponsoring a raffle to help pay for this truck.

The year 1997 was a relatively quiet one; there were just 57 calls that year. Calls were split nearly equally this year, with 29 city calls and 28 rural calls. Fire loss for the city was \$52,900, and value

of property saved was \$127,500.

January 3, 1998 started the year off with a house explosion on West Water Street. The occupant escaped unharmed, but the dwelling's foundation was shifted by the blast.

On February 5, we responded to a 10-50 (automobile accident) for an overturned car. It took two hours of painstaking work to remove the victim, who had become entwined in the sheet

metal of his vehicle. On February 22, a trailer fire was toned out at South Walnut Street and Grand Avenue. This fire started as a result of a faulty heating blanket. Captain Jim Gielow responded to the scene and was able to pull the male occupant from the flaming trailer. Unfortunately, the victim later died of his injuries in a St. Louis hospital.

In May, firemen responded to a mutual-aid call from the Jackson County Ambulance Service. A serious auto acci-

dent had occurred south of Vergennes that involved multiple victims. While en route, the Jackson County ambulance was also involved in a 10-50; since the extrication equipment was on this rig, Pinckneyville was requested to help at the scene. The same month, firemen also gave mutual aid to the Pinckneyville Police Department, helping to locate a

7-foot python named Babe.

On August 22, another 10-50 call came in from south of town at Pyatt's Wye. This involved an automobile driven by Rural Fire Board Trustee president and former fireman Don Lazoen. Sadly, he was pronounced dead at the scene. At the end of the month, a military-type tanker obtained from the Department of Conservation was put into service. This truck responded to less than a dozen fires before it met its end in a 10-50 involving a downtown business.

The Firemen accomplished many things in 1998. A great educational tool was purchased from the Randolph County Firefighter's Association. Firemen had been borrowing the Child Fire Safety House for years to teach hundreds of youngsters how to escape from their homes safely in the event of a fire. This simulated house on a trailer could be filled with theatrical smoke to allow children to practice their escape drill under actual fire conditions.

The firemen once again took the Firefighter Two class. After these 254 hours of training, only John Mucha joined the 12 other certified firefighters



*Tanker Crash with Mann's Sporting Goods  
November 29, 1999*

on the department. Two new firemen joined the department this year: John Cochran and Shane Maxey.

An election of officers was held. Tom Bardle and Jim Gielow retained the captain positions, while David Mucha and Chuck McElvain became the department's lieutenants.

The rural department received a grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for four pack radios, two mobile radios, four sets of bunker gear and two S.C.B.A. (self contained breathing apparatus) with two spare cylinders. The year ended with the firemen giving Chief Smith a handmade golden fire axe.

Fire calls increased by 21 to 80 calls in 1998. There were 38 city calls and 42 rural calls.

The countywide 911 system was nearing its completion. To work within this system, it became necessary for the trucks to receive new identification. The pumpers were identified by numbers in the 40s. The city pumpers became 43, 44 and 45, while the rural pumpers became 48 and 49. The two tankers became 50 and 55. The brush truck became 66, the emergency truck became 76, and the power unit changed to 77. The chief's vehicle was number 99. A new base station radio was also added.

Later on in the year, Rural Fire Protection Trustees removed Assistant Chief David Kelly from his position for failure to perform his duties. The city

followed suit two weeks later. The assistant chief's post was left unfilled; his duties were taken up by the captains and lieutenants.

In 1999, there were 78 fire calls. Thirty-three of these were city calls, for a total fire loss of \$18,150. There were 45 rural calls for a total fire loss of \$337,000.

The 911 system was completed this year, and all roads in the county were assigned new names. A 911 mapping system was made for each of the trucks, to help the firemen reach emergency scenes as quickly as possible.

An election of officers was held in November. David Mucha and Alan McClurken became the 1st lieutenants, while Roy Lipe and Chuck McElvain took on the duties of 2nd lieutenants.

The most newsworthy event for the department took place on November 29. On a return trip to the station from a defensive-driving training exercise, the rural military tanker lost the use of its air brakes while descending the hill on Grant Street. The driver, John Mucha, was approaching the intersection of West Water Street with his brakes failing. The tanker drove through the intersection and embedded itself in the front of Mann's Sporting Goods Store at 515 West Water Street. John Mucha and passenger

*Fire calls increased by  
21 to 80 calls in 1998.  
There were 38 city calls  
and 42 rural calls.*

David Mucha were uninjured in the crash, but the tanker was damaged beyond repair. The Mann's store received thousands of dollars in damage. No tickets were issued at this accident.

The 20th century came to a close very uneventfully, with fire calls numbering only 63. The most memorable event of the year was a routine grass fire north of town. Rosemarie Suchumpski called in a grass fire that was burning near her property boundary. The rural department and a sheriff's car were dispatched to the scene. Upon the county deputy's arrival, he noticed three men watching this blaze and assumed it was a legal, controlled burn. He decided to pull in and verify this before he waived off the rural response.

However, before the deputy could stop his vehicle, one of the men ran to a pickup, grabbed a large box with bags and ran for the wooded area east of the lane. The deputy immediately realized this was out of the ordinary and gave chase. Moments later, totally unaware of the chase incident with the deputy, the brush truck began to douse the blaze. The second engine was requested to return to quarters. As I drove past the scene looking for the nearest place to turn my pumper around, we began noticing lights in the woods going in all directions; just then, the radio sounded for officer's assistance. The Perry County dispatcher replied that there were no officers available at this time. It didn't take long for the deputy to say, "Then get me a fireman, I need some



*Firefighters leading Mardi Gras Parade*



*Mardi Gras Firefighters depiction*

help down here!" My crew headed to the woods, where we found Sheriff's Deputy John Hopkins attempting to apprehend a subject. I assisted the deputy while my crew helped seize the evidence. It had evidently been a prosperous growing season — an estimated 500 to 600 grams of cannabis were recovered with the help of the firemen.

The new rural pumper was commissioned this year. State purchasing grants accounted for \$100,000 of the truck's \$200,000 price tag. This Pierce Pumper, with its 1,500-GPM pump and 1,500-gallon booster tank, replaced 49, which

became pumper 47 until it was eventually sold.

January 2001 started with a large fire at Brown and New Street. This fire had vented through the rear of the structure before the first truck responded. A long, 1,500-foot hose lay was made to the hydrant at Kitten's Kitchen to establish a water supply. This caused the highway through town to be closed for 30 minutes while traffic was diverted around the scene.

Three new firemen were added this year: Jeremy A. Grab, Nathan Opp and Jamie Bathon. Unfortunately, six firemen



of our present members, David and John Mucha. Immediately following the honor guard for Jake, a fire was toned out at the John Ruffino house on Murphy Road. After a long, hard firefight, the building was saved, but it suffered extreme damage to its front and roof.

left the department this year: Jamie Bathon, Paul (Digger) Vuichard, Edward Trail, John Cochran, Frank Bigham and John Mucha

Other noteworthy events around the firehouse included the purchase of a new Ford Expedition by the rural department. It arrived in June and was given the fire department insignia in July. The old Suburban went out for sealed bids, but none of worth were received. The Association held a demolition derby at the fairgrounds in August, and the old PV-47, which was replaced by PV-49, also found a new home.

In June, a large house fire occurred at the Charles Eslinger residence on State Route 154, east of the city. The dwelling was destroyed, but firemen were pleased to hear that one of their \$10 smoke detectors saved the Eslingers' lives. They were awakened by the shrieks of the detector just before the lower floor became filled with smoke.

On September 11, 2001, a day that will forever live in the hearts and minds of all Americans, 343 New York City firemen lost their lives in a terrorist attack against our nation. Our firemen immediately knew they wanted to help their brothers. The 9-11 Fund received over \$1,400 raised by our firemen. Over \$1,200 of this was raised in one day.

More bad news befell our firemen just a week later, when it was reported that the Mayor and former firefighter Kerwin Heisner had died. The men showed their respect by serving as honor guard for their fallen friend. Unfortunately, just weeks later, another former Mayor and fireman, Jake Bender, would also be honored. Jake Bender was also the grandfather of two

On October 16, Sam Fulk left the Public Health and Safety chair to perform other duties as a city commissioner. Max Keene then filled the Public Health and Safety post. The city also appointed a fire merit board, which consisted of John Hartsock, Joel Hopp and Bruce Cope.

The firemen of Pinckneyville and other communities were asked to lead the 2001 Mardi Gras parade. The Association and the Ladies Auxiliary designed a float to commemorate the flag raising at the fallen World Trade towers. Riding on the float were three of the firefighters' children, dressed in firefighting gear. Many of the men were overcome with emotion as cheers roared out from the crowd in respect for the job that firefighters perform for their communities.

The year ended with the town's churches honoring the Pinckneyville policemen, firefighters and E.M.S. personnel. In December, nine firemen were honored for length of service: Dan Naugle, for 5 years; Roy Lipe, for 10 years; Kevin Kelly and Jim Beaty, for 15 years; Tom Bardle and Frank Bigham, for 20 years; Ed Trail and David Kelly, for 25 years; and Chief Jerry Smith, for 35 years.

## CONCLUSION

With the dawn of the new millennium, who knows what may be in the Pinckneyville Fire Department's future? I can only speculate that, with the new state park expansion, the rural department will receive grants to replace an ancient brush truck and give us a new tanker. The city has also long been discussing an aerial of about 75 feet.

For the first couple of future years, one can speculate with some certainty; but what about 50 years from now, or 100?

I wonder if the firemen of 1892 could imagine our department today. One thing is certain: the names may change, the equipment may get bigger, the techniques may become more advanced — but the heart, soul and dedication of these brave men of yesterday, today and tomorrow will not change. I am very proud of what we have accomplished and very proud of those I have served with. I welcome the future, for it will add more history and stories to one great department — Our Department. ♠

*Many of the men were overcome with emotion as cheers roared out from the crowd in respect for the job that firefighters perform for their communities.*

# Department Members

Name	Date		
Pete Baker	4-8-1909 to 1-2-1913	Lestro Forelch	9-27-1951 to
Frederick Thomas Bardle	8-1-1981 to Present	George Fulton	9-15-1910 to 12-19-1912
Bill Barr	10-23-1963 to	Rich Garner	2-8-1984 to
Jamie Bathon	3-1-2001 to 12-31-2001	James Gielow	4-1-1985 to Present
James H. Beaty	3-13-1963 to 9-13-1995	Tom Glodo	9-8-1976 to
James W. Beaty	1986 to Present	Jeremy A. Grab	3-1-2001 to Present
Herman Beck	1966 to	Charles Gruner	2-25-1904 to
Jake Bender	1-16-1941 to	George R. Gruner	10-7 1894 to 9-1-1910
Dale Biby	2-12-1958 to 5-13-1959	George W. Gruner Jr.	5-4-1916 to
Dale Bidy	11-20-1953 to	Harry Gruner	6-4-1894 to 6-23-1999
Frank Bigham	8-1-1981 to 2-1-2001	Kenny Hagene	1975 to
Chad Bird	3-2000 to Present	Dick Harris	9-13-1892 to 9-9-1893
Louis Bischof	6-4-1894 to	Gilbert Helvey	
Tim Bowen	11-10-1998 to 3-2000	Sam Hensley	3-2-2000 to Present
Dan Bradic	3-2000 to 2002	Harry Homer Hickman	2-18-1909 to 12-31-1946
Bob Brand	1-11-1967 to	Kenny Hicks	20-29-1970 to
George Brayfield	1909 to 12-15-1910	Kerwin Heisner	5-1-1981 to
William S. Brayfield	1909 to	Morse Hill	10-15-1970 to
Andrew Grant Campbell	1907 to 3-26-1938	Steve Hill	1983 to 1991
Dean Campbell	10-27-1975 to	Sam Hiller	5-26-1950 to
George Campbell	2-18-1909 to	Joseph Holder	12-12-1973 to
Hugh Campbell	9-1-1910 to	Elmer Lee Holman	8-24-1944 to
Ward Campbell	1-3-1920 to	Virgil Jausel	1-1-1959 to 7-16-1979
James Cavanaugh	6-12-1957 to	Thomas Jeter	10-24-1979
Larry Chapman	10-15-1970 to 11-1-1970	John Jick	6-4-1894
William Clark	6-4-1894 to	James Jones	8-14-1966
John D. Cochran	1-28-1997 to 5-1 2001	Jim Joslin	12-12-1973
Noel Cooke	8-24-1944 to 11-20-1953	Kyle Keene	8-7-1995 to 1999
William Cunningham Jr.	1-16-1941 to 1961	William Keene	10-17-1895 to
Allen Davis	1970 to	Donald E. Keller	5-13-1959 to
Donald Davis	3-1-1985 to 2-9-1994	Marvin Keller	1-8-1958 to
Jeff Davis	1-1-1983 to	Maurice Keller	1-1-1966
Ruben Davis	2-4-1979 to 4-1-1993	Donald Kellerman	3-22 1961 to
Paul Day	6-11-1975 to	Kenny Kelley	11-01-1998 to 3-1-2000
Gordon Deal	1-14-1970 to 6-9 1982	Tom Kellog	7-9-1978 to
Paul Deal	12-12-1973	David W. Kelly	9-8-1976 to 2002
William Dedman	8-31-1911 to 9-5-1912	Kevin M. Kelly	7-15-1986 to Present
Charles Doerr	2-18-1909 to 7-13-1934	Tom Kelly	9-8-1976 to 1982
Jacob Doerr	8-7-1911 to	Rudy Kolhsdorf	8-17-1942 to 4-9-1958
Rev. Tim Dorsch	5-11-1977 to	Bill Kolnegstein	2-12-1958 to
Charles Driemeyer	6-4-1894 to 2-25-1904	Lee Kuhnert	2-12-1963 to
Eric Dunn	1991 to	Don Lazeon	11-11 1970 to 5-13-1981
Ronald Ellet	8-1-1987 to	Mark Lazeon	
George Engelhardt	1-1-1966 to 1-1-1993	Damion Lieke	1998 to 1999
George Etrine	3-6-1905 to	Roy A. Lipe	9-6-1991 to 4-1-2003
Louis Feltmeyer	1-1-1966 to	Oren Loos	5-14-1958 to 10-13-1982
Mitch Feltmeyer	2-1-1986 to 10-22-1990	Kevin Luhneman	6-8-1983 to
	1-1-1997 to 8-1-1999	Hugh Malan	5-26-1950 to
Mark Folden	9-11-1995 to 7-1-1999	Tom Malone	2-4-1895 to
		Tom Mann	6-23-1946 to 8-1-1961

Charles M. Martin	11-11-1995 to 2002
Charles Mathews	12-12 1921 to
Shane A. Maxey	1-30-1997 to 1998
Wilber McCrary	1957 to
Jack McCrary	10-29-1975 to
Alan D. McClurken	12-1-1982 to Present
J.C. McDonald	6-4-1894 to 1908
T.W. McDonald	6-4-1894 to
Clay McDonnough	8-1-1992 to 12-1-1999
Chuck McElvain	7-5-1989 to Present
Joel Miller	11-10-1971 to 12-1-1971
Mike Millikin	1-1-1987 to 3-17-1992
Steve Millikin	3-1-1982 to 3-1-1992
Bret Morton	6-8-1983 to
Leo Morski	1-1-1961 to
David G. Mucha	4-11-1985 to Present
John J. Mucha	7-24-1994 to 12-31-2001
Danny L. Naugle	4-11-1996 to Present
John W. Nehr Korn	1-1-1987 to 3-1-2000
Donald Noward	1950 to
Loren Lee Noward	12-5-1946 to 9-27-1951
Loren Wallace Noward	12-20-1923 to 9-27-1951
Milton Wallace Noward	5-26-1950 to
Enoch Olson	1-4-1966 to
Samuel Valentine Opp	3-19-1975
Nathan Opp	3-1-2001 to 1-8-2004
Troy A. Pabst	6-24-1995 to Present
Michael A. Pearson	1-8-1992 to Present
Brad Perry	1-1-1984 to
John Phillips	2-14-1979 to
Elvis Pick	1-1-1966 to
James Pick	3-4-1956 to
Theo Pick	1-1-1966 to
Dale Pillers	5-4-1916 to
Jerry Price	6-22-1960 to
J.M. Priliers	2-18-1909 to 1-2-1913
Ray Thomas Presswood	3-19-1975 to
Dick Pyatt	1-22-1953 to
Maurice Pyatt	1-1-1966 to
Robert Rebholz	2-25-1904 to
Fred Reese	2-25-1904 to
Halleck Reese	11 20-1953 to
Lee Rice	1-1-1940 to 11-20-1953
Randall Riemen	9-1-1993 to Present
John Francis Rieth	5-4-1931 to 101-1968
Charles Ritter	8-17 1942 to
Jim Ritter	5-26-1950 to 1-14-1970
William Roden	2-4-1895 to 9-1-1910
Herbert Roethe	10-1955 to 1-14-1970
Mathew Rule	2-4-1895 to 1-9-1907
Robert Rule Jr.	5-11-1933 to 11-5-1948
Robert Rule Sr.	5-1-1928 to 11-5-1948
Samuel Rule	2-5-1904 to
Jacob Sattler	2-25-1904 to

Terry Schimpf	7-15-1986 to
Gary Schorfheide	4-20-1989 to
Bill Schrader	1-1-1966 to
Harold Schrader	1-1-1966 to
William Schroeder	6-4-1894 to
Robert L. Schulte	1-19-1995 to 2-1-1996
Charles Schwebel	4-24-1968 to
??? Sherman	9-9-1893 to 6-1894
John Siefert	1-22-1953 to
Danny Sizemore	4-11-1996 to 3-19-2002
Chris Slechticky	8-1-1987 to
Jack Smith	10-28-1959 to
Jeff Smith	6-8-1983 to
Jerry M. Smith	2-1-1966 to Present
Jerry R. Smith	12-14-1983 to
Jim Smith	3-1-1982 to
Mark A. Sroka	3-1-1989 to
A.L. Steber	12-19-1912 to
Charles Swetzler	5-11-1933 to 12-4-1982
J.N. Taffee	1909 to 9-15-1910
J.C. "Lum" Thetford	1898 to 4-26-1943
Lec Thetford	8-5-1909 to 1959
Edward R. Trail	8-1-1976 to 11-1-2001
Gary Trotter	10-15-1970 to
George Ulrich	1-1-1940 to 5-26-1950
Doug Valentine	1990 to
Harold (Tiny) Valentine	5-9-1962 to
C.E. Varnes	1-5-1918 to
Vern Vanzandt	10-14-1935 to
Paul (Digger) Vuichard	9-13-1978 to 8-1-1979 and 10-6-1993 to 10-1-2001
James Wengil	9-8-1976 to
Edward Williams	2-25-1904 to
Robert Williams	1985 to
Joe Williamson	1-22-1953 to
W.W. Winn	2-3-1902 to
Harlan "Shine" Yeager	9-27-1951 to 5-21-1979
R.H. Zahn	10-14-1935 to

### Chiefs of the Department

Dick Harris	9-13-1892 to 9-9-1893
??? Sherman	9-9-1893 to 6-4-1894
Harry Gruner	6-4-1894 to 6-23-1899
Charles Driemeyer	6-23-1899 to 2-25-1904
Mathew Rule	2-25-1904 to 1-19-1907
J.C. McDonald	1-19-1907 to 8-3-1908
George R. Gruner	8-3-1908 to 9-1-1910
Andrew Grant Campbell	9-1 1910 to 3-26-1933
Charles Doerr	3-26-1933 to 7-13-1934
George W. Gruner Jr.	7-13-1934 to 5-11-1938
John Francis Rieth	5-11-1938 to 9-3-1968
Harlan (Shine) Yeager	9-3-1968 to 5-21-1979
Jerry M. Smith	5-21-1979 to Present



# A Tragic End To The White Rabbit

NEAR THE BEGINNING OF THIS BOOK I STATED THAT "HISTORY NEVER SEEMS TO HAVE AN ENDING." WHILE IT DOES TAKE TIME TO EDIT, SORT, WRITE, REWRITE AND ORGANIZE A BOOK, THE EVENTS THAT AFFECT OUR DEPARTMENT CONTINUE. THE PAST YEAR AND A LITTLE MORE BROUGHT MANY NEW FACES TO OUR DEPARTMENT; THOSE MEN WERE: JASON SETTLE, MELVIN WILLIAMS, RUDY STOWERS, JOSH BATHON, SAM SADDLER AND RETURNING FIREMAN FRANK BICHAM. IT SEEMS THAT EVERY TIME OUR ROSTER BEGINS TO FILL UP, WE UNDOUBTEDLY LOSE SOME. THE MEN LEAVING THE DEPARTMENT WERE JASON SETTLE, FORMER ASSISTANT CHIEF DAVID KELLY AND LIEUTENANT ROY LIPE



*1203 using master stream and hand lines at the White Rabbit on September 29, 2002*

**W**e also gained a new Public Health and Safety Commissioner in the 2003 elections; he is Brett McDaniel.

Other events that occurred included the July 1, 2003 cancellation of city dispatching and a return to Perry County dispatching shoulders. A brand-new 2002 International 3200-gallon tanker found a home on the rural side of our firehouse. Fifteen men successfully completed the Haz-Mat Awareness class from the University of Illinois, taught by one of our firemen, David Mucha. A Harley Davidson motorcycle was raffled off by the Association in 2003. It was given away at the Perry County Fair to John Adams of Ava, with this event raising more than 7,000 dollars.

Our big fires during this time were both downtown. The first was the White Rabbit on Sunday September 29, 2002. The building, owned by Mike Rath and leased to the city of Pinckneyville, was located on the east side of the square. Sharon Vallet and Cathy Cole (workers of the craft store) heard a pop; when they investigated the noise, they noticed a light haze and the smell of smoke. They called George Gifford, who drove to the store and checked the fuse box and manager's office; in the meantime, the fire had been burning unnoticed between the upper floor and the ceiling. Shortly before three o'clock, the fire



*DuQuoin ladder truck using an elevated master stream*

vented in the upstairs storage area. The firemen were met with thick black smoke pouring out of the north and east sides of the building. The building construction would not allow entry to our firemen. Just as the firemen predicted, the back part of the building experienced a collapse less than 40 minutes into the blaze. Having no good vantage points to put water on the fire, the blaze raced rapidly through the building. At six in the evening the front of the building came crashing down. Fortunately, all the vehicles parked in front of the building had been removed, including the last vehicle, which was Tibreta Reiman's — a wife of one of our firemen. Assisting the Pinckneyville Fire Department at this scene were Pinckneyville Rural, DuQuoin and Tamaroa Fire Departments. Water mains and the city water tower were extremely tasked at this blaze. Three large monitors and seven handlines were used to control the fire. Only very minimal damage to exposures occurred.

PV-43, fed by the hydrant from the jail, manned its deck gun and two handlines to protect the rear of the building. DuQuoin's ladder truck fed from the hydrant at McDonald's restaurant provided an elevated tower over the top of the south building, which did receive heavy damage but was left standing when the blaze was controlled. Brushtruck PV-66 used its deck gun at the front and north sides of the building fed by PV-45 from the courthouse hydrant. Tamaroa's pumper established a water supply from the U.C.C. Church hydrant to run several handlines.

Loos Excavating was called in to finish removing the burned-out remains of the building. This structure, dating back to the late 1800s, held many retail stores through the years. Gruner's Hardware relocated here after the big fire. Rodell's clothing, Radio Shack, and, in 1993, the White Rabbit, are a few of the businesses run out of this building. This fire will have a definite impact on Pinckneyville;



*Spectators keeping a safe distance*



*Dairy Queen totally destroyed by fire*



it was one of the few remaining businesses left on the square. No plans to reopen this business are presently ongoing as of this writing.

The other downtown fire that challenged our department was the Dairy Queen fire. This building was located on the east side of South Main Street one block from the square. This business had been in operation for more than 40 years. The owner, Ken Furry of DuQuoin, vowed to rebuild as soon as the litigation with the insurance company allows. At this writing, the burned-out shell still remains and is a great concern of the townspeople, who demand that something be done.

On Friday, January 24, 2003, shortly before 3:00 p.m., problems occurred with the deep fryers. Attempts to cool and drain the units were underway when, suddenly, it flashed up into the ceiling vents. The automatic fire-suppression device activated, but was an undersized unit, allowing the fire to travel into the ceiling. The employees and patrons quickly exited. Upon the sounding of the alarm, the first truck arrived on scene in less than seven minutes. The firemen were met with heavy gray/black smoke pushing to the square north of the fire building.

Large handlines were pulled off of PV-43, which had set up directly in front of the structure. PV-45 established a water supply from the Mulberry Street hydrant to the engine. The building, which had been built and remodeled nearly six times, offered a maze to our firemen, who could not direct their hose streams on the seat of the fire. A bucket truck was brought in to allow an elevated stream, but this too found it too rough to get water where it was needed. DuQuoin was called for mutual aid to man our empty station house.

National news highlighted the village of Tamaroa Sunday morning, February 9, 2003. Just after 8:00 a.m., a Canadian National rail tanker train left the tracks



*Dairy Queen from different perspective*

with some 16 cars being involved with spillage and fire ensuing. Pinckneyville was immediately toned out for mutual aid. Tamaroa Fire Department set up to cool the tank cars involved in fire. Fire Chief Jerry M. Smith encouraged this operation be abandoned and an evacuation begin. When the chemicals were finally identified, they were determined to contain some 25,000 gallons of vinyl chloride, formaldehyde, hydrochloric acid, methanol and other chemicals. Before the mass evacuation of over a

million dollars, as it took a week to clear out all the hazardous materials. Four days after the spill, most of Tamaroa residents were allowed back onto their homes.

Another big blaze that requested Pinckneyville's bravest was the DuQuoin First United Pentecostal Church located on South Route 51. Apparently, electric heaters malfunctioned starting this spectacular blaze on April 11, 2003. Eight fire departments were called upon to control this fire, requiring water to be pumped from hydrants from over a quarter-mile away. Fire departments were on the scene for over six hours. The church was completely destroyed but will be rebuilt.

Earlier I hinted to many changes in our department's future. A new brush truck should arrive shortly after this book's printing. Our gender gap is also rumored to be falling during this time period. Even though our history continues, the time for me to reach an end of our history documentation must occur. Therefore, as of July 1, 2003, this book is complete. I look forward to the conversations in and around the firehouse when people finally get to read the pages of history we have made. God bless everyone who has helped write any part of our great department's history and those who will begin the next pages of our heritage. ♠

*Another big blaze that requested Pinckneyville's bravest was the DuQuoin First United Pentecostal Church located on South Route 51.*

thousand residents had been completed, a three-mile area around the spill was closed to all but rescue personnel. The result of this mass incident requested our firemen to be toned out of quarters three different times over a three-day period. The clean up easily exceeded a



*The Firefighter's Prayer*

*When I am called to duty God,  
 Whose flames may rage,  
 Give me strength to save some life,  
 Whichever be its age.*

*Keep me safe, O little child, before it is too late,  
 Give an older person from a mass uncertain fate,  
 Enable me to be alert and hear the ancient shout,  
 And give me aid and opportunity to put the fire out.*

*When necessary to my job,  
 My prayers should never end,  
 Whose flame will give protection hand,  
 And safety every time.*

**For the heroes of yesterday and the heroes of tomorrow.**



*"I hope you find these pages of interest and that you come away with the same pride in our department that I have."*

**— Captain Frederick Thomas Bardle**